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THE

LAMP OF SACRIFICE

SERMONS PREACHED ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS

BY

W. ROBERTSON NICOLL

EDITOR OF 'THE EXPOSITOR,' 'THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE,'
'THE EXPOSITOR'S GREEK TESTAMENT,' ETC.

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TO

CONSTANCE, MAURICE AND MILDRED

PREFATORY NOTE

After some twelve years of service in the Christian ministry, I was physically disabled from public speaking for a considerable period. Since then I have found it possible to give occasional sermons and addresses, and some of them are collected in this volume. It will be seen that the thought of the place and power of Sacrifice runs through the sermons.

Hampstead,
October 1906.

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THE LORD'S SERVANT DEAF AND BLIND[1]

Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?—ISAIAH xlii. 19.

FOR our present purpose it is unnecessary to consider the modern critical interpretation of the servant of the Lord in Isaiah. We apply the title to Christ, and read the text as a side-light on His life. That Christ was in the highest sense the servant of God and man is His own teaching. The Son of man, He said Himself, came not to be served, but to be a servant, and to give His life as a ransom for many. It was the fulfilment of the will of God, the perfect rendering of the service claimed, that was the supreme object of His

[1] Substance of sermon preached at the reopening of Viewforth Free Church, Edinburgh, Sunday, October 16, 1898.

earthly life. He girded Himself through these mortal years, and without ceasing served God and man. Insomuch that the old saying carries a deep truth, that our Lord looked to hear for Himself from His Father's lips the word He spake in parable, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." But how should it be said of the servant and messenger of the Lord that He was blind as none other? How should it be said of Him Whose eyes are as a flame of fire, Whose look struck like a sword? Is it not told that when the Apostle saw Him he fell as dead before the intolerable lustre of His eyes? Did not His gaze pierce to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, to the last recesses of the thoughts and intents of the heart? Are not all things naked and open unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do? Yes; but, as the older writers and expositors have pointed out, He was in a sense blind. They dwelt on the fact that His was the blindness that has no sense of diffi-

culties. It is told of an officer attacking an almost impregnable fort that he was in great peril, and was recalled by his chief. To disobey the recall was death, if only he saw it. He was blind in one eye, and when told of the recall he turned the blind eye on the signal, and asked that the battle should continue. This is the blindness of Christ and His faithful. "Who art thou, O great mountain?" Christ indeed lifted His eyes to the hills, but not to these lower hills that block the way and close us in. He lifted His eyes to the everlasting mountains, towering far above them, on whose summit the final feast of triumph is to be spread. Beyond the obstacles and thwartings that marked His earthly course He had a vision of the patience of God. He was blind, I say, to difficulty, even as His Apostle was. None of these things moved Him. A king about to engage an army five times as large as his own, prayed to God that He would take away from him the sense of numbers. The sense of numbers, in the earthly manner, Christ never possessed. On that side He was blind.

But I speak specially of His blindness to much in life that we consider it legitimate to see. He was blind to the allurement of our ordinary ambitions. The desire for money never seemed to touch Him. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," said He, and He kept His own precept. There is something suggestive in His request, "Show Me a penny." Evidently He did not possess one, and when He died He left nothing behind Him but the garment for which they threw dice beneath the tree. Nor had He anything of the modern feeling, which is not all a sham, that those who can open new channels of commerce and industry, who can promote the peaceable intercourse of the world, are serving humanity. To all this, who was blind as He that was perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant? He was blind also, so far as we can tell, to that region which is the scene of the chief triumphs and apostasies of the heart—the rich and volcanic and often wasted region of passion. I think that Dora Greenwell's remark is true, that the passion of love which forms the staple

of imaginative literature is absolutely unknown to the New Testament. Then let us think of the immense encroachment on human thought and interest that the subject of recreation has made. Go back even ten or twenty years, and you will find that the space devoted to the subject in newspapers has enormously grown. It seems to be growing still, so much that men think more of their recreations than they think of their business. We agree that there is a legitimate place for recreation, but it did not enter into the Lord's thought. His one way of resting was to go into a desert place, or to ascend a mountain and pray. Beyond that, we find nothing in Him that answers to the modern intoxication and craving. Once more, the sphere of art and culture He seems to have left alone. He, the Poet of the universe, was not interested in poetry. He glanced at the Divine glory of the lily, and said that it surpassed even the glory of Solomon. But of the treasures and marvels of human art and imagination He had nothing to say, and apparently nothing to think. On these sides who,

we ask, was blind as He that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?

Again, He was deaf. But who said "the Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair"? It was He Who heard so well the lightest whisper of God: "I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." What response ever came so quickly as our Lord's "Lo, I come"? To be obedient means to listen, and He was a listener unto death. But how deaf He was sometimes, deaf to Satan, deaf to His friends, deaf to His human enemies! How deaf when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness; how deaf to His friends when they sought to alter His course; how deaf to Peter when he said, "This shall not be unto Thee"; how deaf when they tried to make Him a King by force; how deaf in the Judgment Hall when they asked Him, "Whence art Thou? Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee?" The

Incarnate Word stood with locked lips before Pilate, and answered only with a boding, fateful silence to questions such as these. And how supremely deaf when they called to Him, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross"!

But in the same way He was deaf not only to counsels of evil, but to much that seemed legitimate. Here, also, it appears as if many pleasant voices that spoke to Him might have been heeded without sin, and to His happiness. There are voices we think ourselves right in heeding which He might have heeded too. His life might have been richer, easier, more solaced, but He made sharp choices and stern renunciations and swift decisions, and so the fulness of life was not for Him, and its allurement and appeal were vain.

I

A great, and on the whole a salutary, change has gradually passed over Christian thought. The sphere of Christianity has been enlarged;

the Incarnation has been accepted as the hallowing of all life. The words, "All things are yours," have been spoken to this generation with a new force. Religion has been claiming its rights, or rather the rights of Christ, in every field. The Christianity that limited and restrained itself, that refused to enter into various provinces of human activity, and would not take advantage of the developments of the human intellect and imagination, is passing away. The circumstances in which we meet to-day are a proof of this. We say that Christianity must be taken into common life, that it hallows labour and our scene of labour. We insist that the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," is answered by the transfiguration of the human in every department. It was thought, for example, that the Christian should severely limit his possessions. One of the most spiritual of the Bishops says that he has undertaken the administration of large means, and believes that the cares involved thereby will be fertile in blessing. We say that the Christian, and even the Church,

should interfere in the arena of politics. It is said that the power of love as the basis of a State has never been tried, and that it must be tried. We say that this power properly applied will solve the problems of industrial competition. Even for healthy recreation the support and encouragement of the Church are asked, and it is urged that this sphere also may be penetrated by the spirit of Christ. Especially it is claimed that Christianity should annex the whole field of art and literature. There are forms of literary expression which used to be considered incongruous with Christianity. They are now adopted by leading Christian teachers, and made to a certain extent the vehicle of strictly Christian thought. We are told that the painter in order to serve Christ does not need to leave his art. His duty is to remain in it and to consecrate it, to give to God the glory of the sky which He has filled with so pure a blue, and over which He has thrown the pomp of His canopy of clouds. We say to the business man that he is to remain in his business, and to show how the

law of Christ alters the conditions of human labour. We say to the politician that he is serving Christ directly in bringing in nobler manners and purer laws. We urge Christian people to take part in politics, not to hold back from them as if they belonged merely to the world that is passing away, but to make the State Christian by carrying through in its legislation the will of Christ. It has ever been said by Bishop Westcott that direct worship is a small part of life, and that every human office needs to be made holy. Especially is this true in the association of art with religion. Art, we are told, is the handmaid of religion. Our services should be beautiful and rich and fervent; they should gratify the artistic sense. We are to worship God in the beauty of noble churches; we are to use in His praise the richest resources of music. I think of modern Protestants Ruskin was the first, in an early volume of *Modern Painters*, to strike a clear note on this subject, with reserve and warning, it is true, but still unmistakably. Now we can see the change that has passed

over our eyes. It has affected the forms of worship; it has affected the varieties of recreation open to a Christian. It has even enlarged the sphere of occupations in which a Christian is to serve. The restrictions that bound our fathers are more and more falling away, and so far as they exist they are chafed against. It is contended, in short, that every province of human thought and activity is accessible to the mind of Christ.

II

That this drift is, upon the whole, true and Scriptural I, for one, believe. Nevertheless, the principle has to be severely guarded in its application. A homely illustration will perhaps make my meaning clear. Christians of old lived, let us say, in a bare and narrow room, but the fire of faith was sufficient to warm it. If you enlarge the room as you are doing, if you throw into it one space after another till it is a great hall, it follows that the fire must be increased. If it be not, if there be not fire

enough to warm it, all will be cold. And it must be the true fire that is used to warm it, not a fire kindled from this world. We think of the objections of our ancestors to the use, let us say, of organs in worship. They may seem in the light of these days absurd enough. But the real objection lay behind the alleged arguments, and is still worthy of our deep respect and consideration. Our fathers believed that every means of worship must be kept subordinate to the real end of worship. They were willingly deaf and blind to many things which we now see and hear, because they believed that the price demanded for seeing and hearing was too great to pay. The worship that is in spirit and in truth must always mean a distinct and serious effort of the will. It is pleasant to take up a book and be caught away from the first sentence on to the end, to be compelled to read, to have no struggle and no thought. It is pleasant to hear a great orator and to be taken captive by his voice, not to think how the time is passing until he has ended, and then to feel

that it has flown. The resources of art in worship can be used to gratify the senses so that to be present is a pleasure, even though there is no true worship and though nothing has been received. But without the nerving and bracing of the will there is no acceptable sacrifice to God. Our Lord Himself issued the commandment to hear: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Many worshippers nowadays think that this is not necessary, that it is the business of the preacher to compel them to hear. Yet nothing is more certain than this, that to profit by serious religious instruction the mind and will of the hearer, as well as the mind and will of the preacher, must be active. And so in the same way, if a church service becomes a musical treat, it has ceased to be the worship that God requires. It is well for us to enlarge our liberty, if we are sure that the supreme end of worship is not being missed. If it is missed, then I had rather the humblest and barest meeting-place, the rudest music, and the plainest speech. If a babble of voices drowns the Name that is

above every name, it is time for us to draw back. Let us at least understand and respect what our fathers meant, for what they had to do we have to do in our own way—to be always retreating to the centre, to see that the room in which we dwell is not too large for our fire to warm it, to prune our desires and tastes, and to make everything subordinate to the true and inward and spiritual service of God in Christ.

III

Let us ask ourselves whether the atmosphere is warmer. That is the test of church progress. We can go as far as ever we please in the direction of elaborate worship, if this is so. Let us not hesitate to annex the various provinces of recreation and amusement, if we find that the fire of our faith radiates through them and fills them. Let us take a vehement part if we please in politics, so far as this does not impair the quality of our Christian life. Let us cultivate the intellect and the imagination as much as we can, and

intermeddle if we please with all knowledge, so long as we continue to grow in grace. Let us not be afraid of anything, whatever it be, that ministers to the energy of our life in Christ. But I suspect that most of us have to restrict ourselves for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Most of us, if we are to enter into life, must enter more or less maimed. Most of us have to be deaf and blind to solicitations which stronger people might obey innocently enough. No one in recent years has preached more powerfully the hallowing of the common life than the late Dr. Dale of Birmingham. He was eager and strenuous for many years as a preacher, as a student, as a social reformer, and as a politician. Yet in the end of his life he came to the conclusion, wrongly perhaps, that he would have done more and been more if he had kept himself more closely to the work of a Christian minister. Yes, we have to be deaf and blind; but we need not grudge it, for the time is coming when, in the other life, all our energies will find free scope. A character in a recent

novel was accustomed to say about some blessing that it must come soon. Her mouth was made up for it. Her friend replied that this world is just for us to make up our mouths in, and the next is for filling them. We can forgo what has to be forgone, if we look up to the heaven that darkles and shines above us, and remember that all things will there come back and be present again except repented and forgiven sin.

It is good to be last, not first,
  Pending the present distress;
It is good to hunger and thirst,
  So it be for righteousness.
It is good to spend and be spent;
  It is good to watch and to pray;
Life and death make a goodly Lent,
  So it leads us to Easter Day.

IV

For, after all, one thing, and only one, is needful. How have you been led in life? Who are the people who have most profoundly influenced you? For whom has your reverence been deepest, most bending? They have not

been, I venture to say, the clever, the brilliant, the accomplished. They have been the wise —wise with a wisdom that cometh only from the Lord, and only to the children of the kingdom. It is they who are always right, who always seem to know what we should do, who enter the sheepfold by the door, while others climb up their own way. They do not reach their end through long and toilsome reasonings. They have the power of strange, straight vision, which sees right through all mystery and bewilderment to the truth as it really is. They are children to the last, whether they be old or young. I heard a preacher once tell of such a child. Her parents were so poor that they sometimes could not provide her mid-day meal. But she went to school and learned to sing and pray, learned to believe things out of keeping with her sad little experience, and so to say a hearty grace over her dry crust. After one day of pain Jesus took her into His more immediate keeping, and she knew the secret of eternity. How did she find it then? Had

she been right or wrong, foolish or wise? Had the Redeemer played the child false? Nay, verily; yet on earth she had been hungry, and found things hard and painful. What faculty was it, then, enabled her to span the gulf and unravel the perplexity and believe in God the Father Almighty, when she hardly received at His hands even a sufficiency of daily bread? It was the power of vision. It was that combination of the child's heart with the man's understanding which makes the great, whether hero, or doctor, or saint. It was the spirit to which the belief in vaster worlds, spaces, powers, wisdom, love is not intolerable, which does not take itself for the centre or measure of things, which dreams, and hopes, and waits, and prays. St. Paul, the most intellectual of the Apostles, writing to the most intellectual of believers, warned them repeatedly against the wisdom of the world. He had added to his wisdom the child's heart, without which all is vain, and which is not of the childish things that are to be put away.

So in the end we are to be blind to all things in comparison with the beauty of Christ, deaf to all voices but His own. It is for this we seek the House of God—to hear the call which the world through the week is trying to drown, in the hush of the Sabbath day. Let us hear this call in its sweetness and its awe this morning. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is ringing now.

> Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,
> The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea,
> And laden souls, by thousands meekly stealing,
> Kind Shepherd, turn their weary steps to Thee.

Remember He was never deaf and never blind when a soul sought Him. Behold, the Lord's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, neither is His arm shortened that it cannot save. Remember Him on the Cross in a strait where two seas met. Deep called to deep, the sea of misery to the sea of mercy. The Lord's ear was very heavy, but not heavy that it could not hear the thief. His arm was shortened, nailed to the wood, but

not shortened that it could not save. That day the Lord and the thief were together in the new country. If thou seek Him He will be found of thee. Before we speak He calls that we may turn round to Him and say, "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My Face, my heart said unto Thee, Thy Face, Lord, will I seek."

"WHATSOEVER THOU SPENDEST MORE"[1]

Whatsoever thou spendest more.—LUKE x. 35.

"WHATSOEVER thou spendest more." A tenderer light is thrown upon the story by the carefulness of the good Samaritan. He did not take out a handful of money, but two pence. He promised that if more was spent he would pay it back. This was probably one of the innumerable cases of the poor helping the poor, a case in which the gift was sacrificial. We shall take the words as suggesting the four stages in Christian service.

I

The Christian service commences with a provision. He took out two pence and gave

[1] Sermon preached in Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham, on behalf of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (Birmingham and Shrewsbury District), 1899.

them to the host. Whatever our charge may be, at the beginning it seems easy. A man undertakes the reclamation of a drunkard. The pledge is signed, and for a little everything seems to go well, and there is a glow in the heart of the succourer and the succoured. A young girl begins a class in a ragged school, and there is a romance and glamour about the children, and in her own heart a true spring of life which will meet her needs for a time. A young minister is set in charge of a congregation, and how beautiful is the beginning, how eager even the world-worn and weary are to listen to the youthful preacher, how they believe in him, in his singleness of heart, and rejoice in his true vision of God! How he believes in them, and how impossible it is for him to imagine that one day there will be cold looks and colder hearts! We turn back to such beginnings when the morning was fresh with dew, when the spirit was buoyant, when the wind of life sang freshly in our ears, when there was about us the ravishment and the mystery of youth, when it seemed as if no task was too hard

for us to undertake, when we never dreamed that the day would come when we should say, "I am tired; I am not well; the climb is too steep." There was more than the mere freshness of the morning. There was besides a kind provision by Christ. He gave us His two pence, and we joyfully received them, and gladly gave them away, but we did not realise that the time would come when they would be exhausted, and we should have to look up for more.

Yes, we are told to count the cost, and in a certain way we do; but in Christian service we can never count the cost, never realise all that is implied in the first covenant. Even to charge oneself with one frail soul—who can tell what that may mean? But to charge ourselves with many, to fling ourselves against heathendom, to continue the battle for years and years—nothing but experience will tell us what is involved in that. "There are times in a missionary's life," said David Hill, "when the sense of loneliness, the keen want of human sympathy, cuts home like a bleak and bitter

east wind." Said one saint who accomplished a great work, "I knew nothing of the labour and anxiety of this task when I first had to do with you. It has grown upon me with knowledge; it has increased upon me that sense of difficulty, till now, if I did not look quite away from myself and to Him only Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think, I should often despair." And there is this utterance among many from the bravest apostolic heart, "I have been pressed out of measure, above strength, so that I despaired." We remember how Love Himself, Victorious Love, was cast as low as the ground in the Garden of Gethsemane.

II

The second stage of Christian service is when we find at last that the two pence are spent. It is not merely that the holding charm of youth passes from us, that the early confidence and triumph diminish, that the deep undertone of pain makes itself heard. It is also that the two pence are spent. That gladsome first

vision of the Gospel, that undying sense of its power to save, the trustfulness and the hope with which we first preached it, the intense love for fellow believers—these are not with us as they were. Men have disappointed us, and we have disappointed them. They have disappointed us. Alexander has done us much evil, Demus has forsaken us, having loved this present world. It has seemed almost as if our way were hid from the Lord, and our judgment passed over from our God. At the very least our early frankness of trust is shaken. We say with Christ, "Will ye also go away?" and it would not be much of a surprise if all forsook us and fled. In order to love mankind, to quote the sombre French maxim much in favour with John Morley, you must expect little from them. It is not a Christian saying. In order to love mankind you must expect much from them; in order to love a soul you must imagine it as it will be, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, the heir of eternal life, the conquering son of God. But before this expectation is realised, it will be sorely tried. Men

are disappointed with us. No call comes to a higher sphere. What we had to say seems to have been said, and men are weary of it. The day of the Lord has fallen upon all pleasant pictures, and the glow of youth has gone from them. How pleasant were the pictures of the beginning, when we were left with the sufferer in the inn, and with the provision, and with the half-heard word of grace! What dreams we had of devoutness, of holiness, of success, of perfect unity, love and concord! What dreams we had of our own ascending, and oh, how far short we are of what we looked to be and might have been! It seems now as if a stern and grey day of the Lord had come down upon the once roseate life, and made it poor and cold. This is the true crisis in the life of the Christian servant, none the less real because it is so little spoken of.

We are not allowed to die, and we must not give up. We are not allowed to die, although it is always better in a sense for the Christian to die than to live. Yet it is always better to live so long as we can do God's will and God's

work, and we can do it, though in another fashion. It is not as it was with us at the beginning. Dreams may be dispersed, hopes may have grown chill, efforts may have failed, love may have been lost, and goodness may have been trodden down. No longer do we walk on the green paths, no longer are we admired or applauded. At the best there is before us the dusty road of common duty, and it may be that the burning sand of the desert is beneath our feet. And yet we are not going to give up. There is something in the Christian heart that silently protests. "I think I have done enough, and yet I should like——" "And yet I should like——" That is the undertone that will save us. It is with that feeling by God's grace that we may be able to turn the battle at the gates. Forts which temptation never reached before are now attacked, but we will not suffer them to be carried. And if we understood it, this is just the point when the nobler life begins, the point when the two pence are spent, and when we are left with Christ and with His

good word. For then we begin the road of self-sacrifice, and set our faces steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. Beautiful is the untried and sanguine love of youth, beautiful is its instinctive choice of the noble and the pure; but more beautiful the love that has been salted by fire, and the righteousness that has endured hardness. Life is sterner, but to the eye of Christ it may be clothed with a diviner beauty than that which has faded for ever.

There is a point up to which Christ can say to His servants, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, ye have not yet known what true sacrifice means." Perhaps He says that of many to the very end: but He does not say it of His chosen vessels. "I will show him," He said of Saul, "how great things he must suffer for My name's sake"—not how great things he must say or do for Me, but how great things he must bear. Without shedding of blood there is no entrance into the higher life. In a manner the Lord's experience is spiritually repeated by the Christian. We die into the deeper union with Christ, into the

profounder life, through the offering up of ourselves upon the altar.

III

The third stage, then, is when we discover that in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings we have the power of His resurrection. It is that fellowship which St. Paul, after years of endurance, still prayed that he might know. We discover that in the spending we are enriched from the unsearchable stores of Christ.

Through the surrender of self-love and self we come into that sunlight which steeps even the valley of the shadow of death, into the peace that is like a river and the righteousness which is as the waves of the sea. We begin like Christ with preaching, and we go on till it comes to strong crying and tears, and at last to dying. But the life that pours itself out is ever receiving new streams of force, and is richer for what it loses. If we go on growing, the last years may be in a sense the saddest years, and yet they may be the noblest and

the most constant years, and in the deepest sense the most joyous. You have read the life of Dr. Dale, and you may have said, "How sad are these last years, how much better it would have been if his fellowships had remained inviolate, and if he had seen the measures which he so passionately advocated carried through in triumph!" I do not know. The closing years of his life may have been sadder years in a sense, but they were perhaps more noble, more constant, more faithful years. They were years assuredly when he entered into a deeper fellowship with Christ, and if that was granted all the rest might go. It is when we climb the steeps of the hill Difficulty that we come to our best. What art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. Oh! may the promise come true. In this mountain, bare, and bleak, and wind-grieved, shall the Lord of Hosts make a feast of fat things.

The work is not done, the sufferer is still unhealed. What then? We have to go on spending. Our Lord knew it, hinted it—

"Whatsoever thou spendest more." In the beginning we missed these words, we did not recognise their significance, but now day by day as it passes makes the meaning clearer. Yes, we must spend more and more and more, stripping the garments from us one by one, and at last spending our very heart's blood. But it is in that spending that we are enriched. It is in that spending that we become conscious at last that the unsearchable riches of Christ are ours, the riches that will never give out. If when the two pence are spent we cease to spend, if we go back upon the past, if we repeat old words that have lost their freshness, if we do our tasks slackly, then we are already dead. But if we go on working and working at greater cost, then we shall at last come to understand the saying that verges on the unsayable, not on the unintelligible, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

IV

The last stage of Christian service is reached when we suddenly find ourselves in the land of Beulah. Christ has been with us all the years, pouring His own life into the barren river-beds of ours. Then of a sudden we seem to behold the Lord at hand, and to hear Him saying, "I will repay thee." No more than that. The host had just the good Samaritan's word, and he was content. Christ will come again, and when He comes He will repay us. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and we are to live in the strength of the promise. Dr. Dale has told us that at one point of his ministry he read the New Testament over to see whether there was any great aspect of revealed truth which he was neglecting in his ministry. He came to the conclusion that he was ignoring the repeated promises of reward given in the Gospel. Human sympathy and joy and praise are very sweet, but we can live without them if we have before us the welcome

of the Eternal. You cannot read the New Testament without seeing that the Apostles fulfilled with tenfold vigour the tasks of life just because they had before them always and so clearly the guerdon of the future. It would fill the Christian Church with new wine to conceive as vividly as they conceived the sure and everlasting prize for which we are running. "I will repay thee." No matter how scant our wages here, how grudged, how delayed, He is sure to bless. We may feel that the least reward from His hands will be enough. We may not strive after the brightest crown and the dearest expectation; we may be content if He will but keep His promise, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me." We hardly need to proceed and say "on My throne," for wherever He sits, there is the throne. Yet is not that enough—is it not the best? What is it in life that is most blessed? Surely there is nothing in life half so sweet as the fellowship of the beloved. There is nothing in heaven half so sweet and great and dear. Among the

promises of the reward, this one is perhaps above the rest, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me." To fall back again on the prophetic word, may we not say that it is when things seem dead against us, when we are buffeting the wind and rain, when no man knows us, when our store is spent, when we are at the hardest point of the hill Difficulty, that the rapture of the invisible discloses itself, and we cry, "There is nothing for me here." But there is everything, and He is not far off. For it is written, "In *this* mountain He shall destroy the face of the covering cast over all people and the veil that is spread over all nations." He shall *destroy* the face of the covering—not merely tear it in two, but destroy it every fragment, so that there may be clear vision for ever. What was once a wall between us and the next world has become a trembling screen. One day before we die there will not be left even so much as this. "Could we but climb where Moses stood!" We may climb at last. The transcendent revelation of the future is given

to us when we are spending most, when the life-blood of the soul drops like rain.

Do you understand Bunyan's parable of Beulah? Why is Beulah, Beulah? Because the pilgrims were within sight of the city they were going to, the ancient city of our thoughts and loves and hopes. They saw its towers and temples, and mingled with its people, for in this land the Shining Ones commonly walked. They saw it nearer and nearer, and with desire fell sick. It does not matter where on the shore of the dwindled river we die. What can it matter whether it is China or India or England. William Burns died preaching the redeeming love of Christ to the Chinese assistants by his bedside. When they looked for his property they found a Chinese and English Bible, an old writing-case, a Chinese lantern, a single Christian dress, and a blue flag of the Gospel boat. That was all. "Surely," said a child in the awestruck silence, "he must have been very poor."

So in the ministry of Christian service the

last is the best. It may be best with us long after the two pence are spent, when we are spending more and more, and yet spending far more consciously than before what is not ours by nature. The promise marks an ascent, though it may not seem to do so. "They shall mount up on wings as eagles." There is a better thing, "They shall run and not be weary"; and best of all there is this, "They shall walk and not faint." It is the climax of covenant grace.

So as of old I follow Him,
Only another way;
When the lights of the world are growing dim,
And my heart already is singing the hymn
Of twilight grown to day.

NOT AFRAID OF SACKCLOTH[1]

None might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.—ESTHER iv. 2.

Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.—II COR. iii. 12.

IN the Book of Esther iv. 2, we read, "None might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth." St. Paul in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians iii. 12 says, "Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech." In the first text we read of a refusal to face the facts of life, the hard and painful facts—"None might enter into the king's gate clothed in sackcloth." In the second we read of an unflinching sincerity of vision, and of a sincerity which does not flinch

[1] Sermon preached before the Methodist New Connexion Conference in Salem Chapel, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Tuesday, June 12, 1900.

because it is armed by a great hope—"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech."

There are three ways in which we may deal with the harder things of life. First of all, we may take the way of the Eastern king and resolve not to see them, to bar the door against them, to act as if they did not exist. There is a second way. We may face them without the Christian hope. There is a third way. We may face them with the Christian hope, and that is the true and only wisdom. Let us dwell for a moment on those three ways or methods.

I

We may close the eyes and the ears, and say that we will not look upon the things that affright and affront us. "None might enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth." We know what that leads to, that life lived in an unreal world, in a world of imagination. We know what it has done in history through all the ages. Our fathers looked upon the

French Revolution as a mere outbreak of the spirits of hell. Considering the matter with fuller knowledge, we see that the storm was provoked by a long course of crime and folly, by a persistent deafness to the harsh discords of humanity. Rulers who believed that they existed for nothing but their own pleasure were destroyed from off the face of the earth as a sign to mankind. It was the blindness of the rulers that roused the madness of the people. We may close the doors and curtain the windows and hide, as it were, our faces from misery, but it is in vain. The flaring lights flicker, the storm outside begins to mutter and to break, and the inexorable call comes, and we have to open our eyes and look out on the woe and the wrong and the torture of this world, on all the wretchedness that is rising against us to sweep us from our place. Nor by any decree can we keep from our homes the antagonists of peace. Treachery will enter, and be a fire in the heart; love will come in, and be a misery; bereavement will follow, and take the light

from life. In other words, even the king cannot keep his gate against the dark ministers of pain that insist upon an entrance, and will force it at last.

II

We may look willingly or unwillingly at the facts of life without any hope in Christ. I will not speak of those, and there are many, who look upon the agony of the world simply to find in it the opportunity of new sensation. We have read of women flaunting over the stricken field of war, and they have been visited with a righteous condemnation. When, many years ago, attention was forced on the unspeakable degradations of London life, there was a pastime called slumming which actually became fashionable. A bastard sentimentalism joined to a prurient curiosity took many to see under what conditions life was lived in East London. There was at the back of it no truth, no sincerity, and it soon passed away, leaving hearts that were already as hard as the nether millstone harder still,

if that were possible. I wish to speak rather of the hopeless, earnest, despairing outlook on the miseries of life. There are those like the poet whose hearts become as

> A nerve o'er which do creep
> The else unfelt oppressions of the world.

They meditate upon sin and grief and death, upon the vast sum of human woe, upon their little and slow means for diminishing it, till the heart spends itself in fierce and hopeless throbs. The thought beats upon the brain like as on an anvil. Yet all becomes at last so commonplace and so sad and so far beyond remedy. The waves of mournful thought cannot be stemmed, but they flow in vain. The end is at best a quiet misery.

> But now despair itself is mild,
> Even as the winds and waters are;
> I could lie down like a tired child,
> And weep away this life of care.

At worst it is a passionate and vain rebellion. It was said about three of the most distinguished among French social reformers that

they all of them at last died of their wounds, defeated, broken-hearted, almost unmanned. It was because they never learned to ally their own compassion for humanity with the vastness of the love and pity of Jesus Christ.

III

We come to the one wise way of facing the problems and the agonies of life without flinching and without fear. We may face them so as possessors of the Christian hope, and in no other way—"Seeing then we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech."

St. Paul has been speaking of the comparative dimness of the Mosaic ministry. That ministry had passages of glory, but the glory was transitory and faded away. It was shone down by the everlasting splendour of the new ministry of Christ. In Christ the veil was taken away, and taken away for ever. There was a veil on the face of Moses: there is no veil on the face of Jesus. It is as if the eyes

that sought each other with such desire burned the screen that parted them. So, said the Apostle, since we live in light, we speak in light. We declare every truth of the Gospel, we make every claim for our ministry. The future glory will make all our words good. We are not afraid to look on the hostile elements of life and call them by their true names. We need no disguise, no euphemism, no softening. We use great boldness of speech, and are not afraid. Christianity, be it remembered, is the only religion that has fairly measured itself with sin and grief and death. It has undertaken at last to subdue them completely. It recognises the sternness of the battle; it confesses that the foes are terrible foes. It has no hope save in the might of Christ Who is conquering and to conquer, but in Him it reposes an unshaken and absolute and inviolable trust.

(1) Take, to begin with, sin. Christianity does not make light of sin. It knows that sin is something more than a derangement, something more than a disease. Though it

does not deny those relics of the image and glory of God that dwell in the human heart, it does not seek to rally the still lingering forces that make for the right in the most degraded human soul. It uses great plainness of speech, and describes the state of man not as a sickness, but as a death. Its phrase is "dead in trespasses and sins," that is the blight of humanity. Christ has come to raise the dead. "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." It is only by working the miracle of resurrection that Christ can deliver one human soul. Christianity fully recognises the far-reaching issues of transgression, the vitriolic intensity of remorse, but it comes to undo the coil of consequences. It comes to liberate from the guilt, the penalty, and the power of sin. And it does so by setting over against the immense disaster of the world the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what no other religion does. At best, every other religion heals hurt slightly, or does not heal it at all. Whenever we begin

to go into the doctrine of atonement we find ourselves confronted by problems of immense complexity. We are plunged into the "abysmal depths of personality." Nevertheless the human heart has always answered and always will answer to the Divine remedy for sin. It understands the parable of Heine. After quoting the Homeric description of the feasting gods, he says: "Then suddenly approached panting a pale Jew with drops of blood on his brow, with a crown of thorns on his head, and a great cross laid on his shoulders; and he threw the cross on the high table of the gods so that the golden cups tottered, and the gods became dumb and pale, and grew even paler till they at last melted away into vapour." Yes, it is the Cross that has redressed the balance; it is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses from all sin. The old question—

> Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
> To wash it white as snow?

is asked to no purpose. There is not rain

enough. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten the defiled hand. But at the last it comes to this, that the Christ crucified is to them that believe the power of God and the wisdom of God. It is told of a great Greek scholar that his last days were days of sadness. He was worn by pain, and his powers of speech failed him. The expression of his eyes, like those of the dying Agricola, desired something, and that something was found in a large printed copy of the well-known hymn—

> Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee,

which had been displayed a few days before by one of his family. He passed peacefully away after he had read the familiar words. He found, as all sinners may find, a refuge in that strong Rock that was rent by love, and there is no other refuge. Because we can speak plainly of the Cross, we can speak plainly of sin.

(2) In the same way Christianity measures itself with grief. It says that at last there will

be no place for it. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." Griefs come upon us in such battalions. They implicate themselves so closely with our life. They are, as it would seem, the inseparable companions of what is best and dearest and highest in this world, and it is very hard for us to imagine how we shall ever be done with them. Christianity itself recognises this. Even when the Tabernacle of God is with men and He dwells with them, and they are His people and He Himself is with them and is their God, tears linger in their eyes. But He is not content to have it so. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. He will plunge grief into the nethermost fires, therein to be consumed. And how? Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows:—

All tears done away with the bitter, unquiet sea,
Death done away from among the living at last,
Man shall say of sorrow—Love grant it to thee and me!—
At last, "It is past."

(3) Again, Christianity measures itself with death. Lessing, I think, was right when he took the view that Christianity presents death in a more awful light than heathenism. The Greek view of death made it the twin brother of sleep, and so in a manner amiable. Christianity increases the terror of death by showing it as the wages of sin. "Some philosophers," said Lessing, "have thought that life was a punishment, but to consider death such was a view which apart from revelation could hardly have occurred to the human mind." So here also we use great plainness of speech. We say that death is terrible not merely because it is the end, but because it is the beginning. It is terrible not merely for its accessories, but because it is the judgment of God upon transgression. St. Paul himself recognised that death was the last enemy to meet Christ in the field and to be destroyed. And yet so absolute was Christ's victory over death that in the New Testament it is spoken of as sleep. It is not that the name has been changed, but that the thing itself has been changed, changed

in its very nature and essence. More than eighteen hundred years have passed since St. Paul taunted death and the grave in words of triumphant scorn. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And yet there is not one of us to-day who has not felt the sting of death. There is hardly one who has not wept over the seeming victory of the grave. But we know that for the Christian there is no death, that Christ by rising again, the firstfruits of His sleeping people, has plucked the sting from death and spoiled the victory of the grave; and so we can look calmly at it, and have peace—peace by the death-beds of our dear ones, peace when our own life is slipping away from us, peace as we stand by the grave where already we have two or three gathered together in His name, peace in the thought that they all live to God, peace in the hope of the day to be when the little hills in the churchyard shall rejoice on every side—at the voice of the archangel and the trump of God. For Christ has abolished death.

(4) To give one more illustration, we can afford to speak very calmly about the world and its enmity to Christ. There is no need that we should deceive ourselves. We need not try to think that we are in the majority, or that we shall have an easy triumph. We do not need to underrate the forces that are against us, nor do we need to minimise the hostility of the natural man to Christ. What says the Apostle? "The whole world lieth in wickedness." And again, "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called." We need not fear to face the fact that our progress is slow and difficult, and that sometimes even we seem to go back. We are advancing at the best inch by inch through a hostile and difficult country. The tide of battle rolls backward and forward. If we seem to gain, our adversaries immediately become more resolute and desperate. Sometimes we wonder what is to come of it all. Will Christianity be able even to hold its own in England? Sometimes we think that Christ has forgotten us, and say that He is as a man

astonied, and as a mighty man that cannot save. There are hearts here that are very sore for some branches broken from the True Vine or the latter rain denied. I do not believe that we have the means of measuring the advance of the kingdom of God. Sometimes, indeed, there are revivals, overflowing tides of grace before which the mountains seem to be swept away. But I am sure that you cannot measure the advance of the cause by the statistics of the visible Church. Christ is calling many who never associate themselves with their brethren, and whose names are not to be found on any of our rolls. And it may be even that the visible Church makes more progress in years when she confessedly declines than in years when she increases. It may be that we should be stronger if, like Christ, we aimed at quality rather than at quantity. In any case, we are not to be moved overmuch by such things. We can afford to admit all the difficulties, to admit them frankly. We can do it because we have such a hope, because we know that Christ is conquering

and to conquer, and that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. We rejoice in every sign of success, we rejoice in every new sanctuary that is opened for the worship of Christ. We rejoice in every living and awakening ministry bestowed by the Redeemer upon His Church. But what we rest upon is not any of these things. We rest upon Christ's sure promise, upon Christ's living energy, on the power of the Holy Ghost.

"None might enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth," but Christ our King offers his welcome and His heart to those who are clothed in sackcloth, who are weary and heavy-laden. I am sure there are such among us this morning, men and women brooding vainly over the past, and afraid to think about the future. You have entered the King's gate. Come to the King. Bring your sins and your sorrows to Christ. Come into the covenant, come into His company, and He will never leave you. His presence will make all the difference. It will not in this world bid

sorrow and struggle depart. The heart is heavy—

> To think that each new week will yield
> New struggles in new battlefield.

But if He is with us in the fight, everything will be changed. Said St. Paul once, "I will abide and winter with you." He has promised to be with us to the end of the world, and He will winter with us through the dark, cold years until the winter ends, until we pass from the turmoil of this world to the peace of that. And for you who are not yet clothed in sackcloth, for you whose peace has not yet been broken by the dark sorrows of life, He is the Friend of friends. I know that a young heart may be very heavy. I know that the ancient thirst of humanity is in the most joyous spirit and will crave for satisfaction. This morning your hopes may be high, but in your souls there is always that low cry for rest, that low cry which swells at last into passionate weeping if the rest is not given. You have the hard things of life before you, but you need not fear them if you win the hope that is in

Jesus Christ, or rather if you win Him, for He is the hope. Unto Him that loved us and loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us a kingdom of priests unto God, even the Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Might we all join at last in that triumphal cry!

GETHSEMANE, THE ROSE GARDEN OF GOD[1]

"Without shedding of blood is no ——."—HEBREWS ix. 22.

I DO not use the complete sentence. It is true even upon the lowest plane that without shedding of blood there is nothing, no mighty result, no achievement, no triumph. Every worthy deed costs something; no high thing can be done easily. No great thing can be accomplished without the shedding of blood. Life is just our chance of making this great and strange discovery. Many of us never make it. We begin by trifling, by working with a fraction of our strength. We soon see that nothing comes of that. At last, if we are wise, we see that all the strength is needed.

[1] The Annual Sermon preached before the Wesleyan Methodist Foreign Missionary Society in Great Queen Street Chapel, London, Friday morning, April 26, 1901.

What have we besides this? We must disrobe ourselves. We do it; yet our object remains ungained. What more have we to give? We have our blood. So at last the blood is shed, the life is parted with, and the goal is reached. We are happy if we know that everything noble and enduring in this world is accomplished by the shedding of blood, not merely the concentration of the heart and soul and mind on one object, but the pruning and even the maiming of life. Young men are being taught this lesson now, and unless all signs are false they will be taught it more sternly in the future.

Without shedding of blood there is no ——. There has been from the beginning a profound and solemn witness in the human heart to this. Many of the primitive religious ideas are God's deep preparation of the mind and heart of man for the grand Gospel of Christianity, the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ for guilty sinners. This witness is embedded in our language. What is meant by the word "bless"? It is derived from the Anglo-Saxon

word for blood. We may legitimately translate this by saying that before we can truly bless another human being we must shed our blood for him. You can lighten a brother's way by cups of cold water, by small gifts, by smiles, by friendly words, and these things are great in the eyes of Christ. But to bless in the superlative degree we must part with life. Without shedding of blood it cannot be. And the primitive religions everywhere bear the same witness. It was thought that a life had to be buried in the seed-ground before there could be a harvest. The old legend of Copenhagen tells us that its founders failed again and again. Their work was destroyed by the sea, till at last a human life was sacrificed, and the city became stable. I might quote from the Greek tragedians, whose theology is a deep theology, to the same effect. However crude, however dis torted, these notions might be, they all pointed men onwards to the supreme Altar of the universe where Jesus died, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

So the Eternal Son shed as it were great drops of blood in Gethsemane, and offered Himself immaculate to God on the Cross. We can never render the doctrine of the Atonement in terms of human self-sacrifice and self-surrender. Rudyard Kipling, in his *Light that Failed*, puts the true word into the mouth of one of his characters: "I'd take any punishment that is in store for him if I could, but the worst of it is that no man can save his brother." But the human analogies help us, and, indeed, the doctrine of the Atonement without them would be a mere blank for our minds. So I seem to see how it is that the simple receive and understand the plainest preaching of the glorious truth of propitiation, and leap to it, while those whose minds are overlaid with speculation and what is called culture find it difficult. Alas! we often see theologians, even Evangelical theologians, using infinite evasions and subtleties to disencumber themselves of the one weapon without which the Evangelist can do nothing at all. But we know that Christ's appearing

would have had no purpose and conduced to no end, if He had not stayed long enough with us to shed His blood in Gethsemane and Calvary. To know what our redemption cost Him we must, with the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, look at Gethsemane as well as Calvary, and even then we do not know.

None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed ;
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

But we do know something. We see Him in His extremity when He began fully to understand the bitterness of His cup. We hear Him pray His prayer with strong crying and tears, "If it be possible let this cup pass from Me." That *transeat calix*! There is no prayer like that, no prayer ever uttered with such intensity. The prayer that is lifted when it seems just possible that the cup may pass, and that the pleading may decide it, is in itself a shedding of blood. We realise the dim witnesses who heard afar the broken moaning, the long sobs, who witnessed the hard-won

victory which seemed a defeat, who could not watch with Him *one hour*. We know what the strain must have been when there came to His succour the all-pitying but undimmed Angel. If it had not been that God made His minister a flame of fire in that darkness, could Christ have conquered? The cup was not taken away, but the prayer was answered, for His lips were made brave to drink it. Perhaps they are right who say that Gethsemane was the crowning point of our Redeemer's sufferings, though it was on Calvary that He finished His work. I do not know. He quivered for a moment on Calvary, too.

I shall endeavour to illustrate simply two missionary ideas partly suggested by etymology. Blessing, as we have seen, means blood-shedding. With blood, too, are connected the words bloom and blossom; that is, the perfection and crown of life comes out of death. So, then, we speak first of blessing from blood-shedding to others, and next of the perfect bloom of life in ourselves coming out of death.

I

Blessing comes from blood-shedding; that is, our power to bless in the highest sense comes from our shedding, as it were, great drops of blood. We need not shed them literally, though the Church has justly placed the martyrs first. The Church of Rome never prays for the martyrs, but makes request for their prayers. The martyrs it sees before Christ in robes of crimson, and the saints in white. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. We cannot atone, but we can bless. We cannot have a share in the one perfect Oblation, the Evening Sacrifice of the world, but we fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. Of every great servant of Christ it is true that the Lord says, "I will show him how great things he must *suffer* for My Name's sake." It would not be right to say that it is the suffering that counts, and not the labour. What is true is that the labour without the suffering does not count, that the two in a fruitful life are indissolubly joined.

We are familiar with the great passages in which the Apostle is driven to use the awful language of the Passion, where he says, "I am crucified with Christ, I die daily." And it is true that all along the way there are sacrifice and blood-shedding. But I believe it is equally true that there is but one great Gethsemane in the lives of Christ's blessed servants. Many have none, and their work comes to little, but the elect have one that stands above all, one shedding of blood, one death, after which the rest seems easy. Can we know the Gethsemane of another? I think not often. It is passed, as a rule, with little sign or show. When George Howe, in the *Bonnie Brier Bush*, came home to die, his mother hid herself beneath the laburnum to see his face as the cart stood beside the stile. It told her plainly what she had feared, and Marget passed through her Gethsemane with the gold blossoms falling on her face. You may be passing through yours now, and there is little to show it—some absence of manner, some twitching of the lips, but no more; and

you will never tell any one of it, and no one may discover it even after you are dead. One may suspect another man's Gethsemane, the time when he parted with his life, but very likely one is wrong, and the surrender he is thinking of was accomplished almost without murmur or reluctance. It is so in biographies. We sometimes think that we see when we do not. The Gethsemane may be, and often is, the rooting out of some cherished ambition that has filled the heart and occupied every thought. It may be the shattering of some song, the breaking of some dream. It may be, and often is, the great rending of the affections, the cutting of the soul free from some detaining human tenderness. Anyhow, the full agony cannot last more than a little, though the heart-ache may persist through a lifetime. "Could ye not watch with Me *one hour*?" I sometimes think that blood-sheddings are far more common than we are apt to imagine, and that they take place in the most unlikely lives. In the memoir of Dr. Raleigh, a prosperous suburban minister with

every earthly ambition realised, there is a significant passage. When he was at the zenith of his fame he said that ministers came and looked round at his crowded church, and envied his position. "They do not know what it cost me to come to this." So, in James Hamilton's life, we are permitted to see how he parted, for Christ's sake, with his great ambition. He wished to write a life of Erasmus, and devoted many years to preparation, but other claims came and baulked him of his long desire. He says: "So this day, with a certain touch of tenderness, I restored the eleven tall folios to the shelf, and tied up my memoranda, and took leave of a project which has sometimes cheered the hours of exhaustion, and the mere thought of which has always been enough to overcome my natural indolence. It is well. It was a chance, the only one I ever had, of attaining a small measure of literary distinction, and where there is so much pride and haughtiness of heart it is better to remain unknown." I think we may easily see where the Gethsemane

was in Henry Martyn's life, and I think one may also see it in John Wesley's life, though I should not care to indicate it. But the heart knoweth its own bitterness. What we know is that the Gethsemanes in the Christian life come in the course of duty, and in obedience to God's will as it is revealed from day to day.

Wesleyan Methodists have always recognised that blessing must come from the shedding of blood, from the parting with the life. I might quote many passages, but must content myself with two. John Wesley, speaking of a reputed saint, rejects his claims, saying, "No blood of the martyrs is here, no reproach, no scandal of the Cross, no persecution of them that live godly." Dr. Adam Clarke, in his address at the foundation of the London Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1816, made special reference to the Moravians. I need not say how great the Moravian influence was on early Methodism. He told his hearers how, when the Moravians were only six hundred in number, they had missionaries all over the world. The begin-

ning was in this wise. A negro named Anthony came from St. Thomas, and passed under the influence of Zinzendorf. He said that his fellow-slaves were seeking a missionary to declare to them the true God, but the missionary could only find entrance if he went as a slave. Two brethren, Leonard Dober and Tobias Leopold, immediately offered themselves, and expressed their willingness to be sold as slaves that they might preach Christ. We may be sure, whether we are aware of the facts or not, that no life that brings fruit to God is without its Gethsemane, its parting with life, its shedding, as it were, great drops of blood. But, as the Saviour's blood fell on the cursed ground and blessed it, so the blood of the surrendered soul makes Gethsemane a garden. If not now, then hereafter; sooner or later the time must come.

II

The bloom and perfection of life to the missionary come from the shedding of blood.

Observe that I am not speaking here of the blessing to others, but of the blessing that is meant to come to ourselves in the great enrichment of the spiritual life that should follow, and abundantly make up for, the impoverishment and expenditure of the natural life. What comes after the parting with the natural life, after the shedding of blood, after the death to the world? Various things come, but what ought to come is the resurrection life, which the shedding of blood has made room for.

It does not always come even to the servants of God whose lives are faithful. Their work is fruitful, never without result, but they themselves have not the full blessing of the resurrection life.

(1) Often the Gethsemane of the soul means a brief tarrying in this world. It seems as if too much had gone, as if the spirit could not recover its energies. There are a few books peculiarly dear to the heart of the Church which I may call Gethsemane books. The chief are the lives of Brainerd, Martyn, and

McCheyne. All of these died young, not without signs of the Divine blessing, but prematurely—rich and fervid natures exhausted and burnt out. I do not overlook physical causes and reasons, but in each case there was a Gethsemane. Read the memoir of Brainerd, which Wesley published in an abridged form. It was written by Jonathan Edwards, the greatest intellect of America. Mark its reserved passion, its austere tenderness. Read the story of young Jerusha Edwards, who followed her betrothed so soon, and you feel that you have done business in great waters. Read Brainerd's aspirations. "Oh! that I might be a flaming fire in the service of my God. Here I am; Lord, send me; send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough, the savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort in life or earthly comfort; send me even to death itself, if it be but in Thy service and to promote Thy kingdom."

(2) Sometimes the earthly life parted with is not fully replaced by the resurrection life,

and a long-drawn melancholy ensues. It is so, I venture to think, in the life of Charles Wesley. It will be granted by the most ardent admirers of that great saint and supreme Christian poet that the last thirty years of his life will not compare with those of his mighty, strenuous, ardent youth. They were sad years in the main, spent in comparative inaction, and with many weary, listless, discontented days. There is something most attractive about the melancholy of his hymns, but it must never be forgotten that there is no such thing as melancholy in the New Testament, and that such strains as—

> I suffer out my threescore years
> Till the Deliverer come,

and

> Explain my life of misery,
> With all Thy Love's designs on me,

however they may fascinate us in many moods, are not really Christian. The text of Charles Wesley's later years, the text that must ever be associated with his name, was, "I will bring the third part through the fire." He thought

that one-third part of Methodists would endure to the end. He never sought an abundant entrance for himself into the heavenly kingdom, never asked more than that "I may escape safe to land—on a broken piece of the ship. This is my daily and hourly prayer, that I may escape safe to land." In his later days he used to warn those who summoned him that a flood was coming which might sweep away much of the religion in the country. This was not the highest nor even the normal Christian life. Our Gethsemanes are not meant to end in gloom and melancholy. They are meant to give us, by the grace of God, a richer, even an eternal life in the place of that which we have lost. Our sufferings must be well used, for "in this mortal journey wasted shade is worse than wasted sunshine."

(3) No, the bloom of life should come out of death. The resurrection life should pour into the depleted veins, and fill them with strength and peace. That was eminently the experience of John Wesley. Branch after branch was withered, but every time the new

life rushed through all the arid fibres, and they bloomed again. There is no book, I humbly think, in all the world like John Wesley's Journal. It is pre-eminently the book of the resurrection life lived in this world. It has very few companions. Indeed, it stands out solitary in all Christian literature, clear, detached, columnar. It is a tree that is ever green before the Lord. It tells us of a heart that kept to the last its innocent pleasures and interests, but held them all loosely and lightly, while its Christian, passionate peace grew and grew to the end. To the last there are, not diminishing, but increasing, the old zeal, the old wistfulness, the calm but fiery and revealing eloquence. John Wesley was, indeed, one of those who had attained the inward stillness, who had entered the Second Rest—of those who, to use his own fine words, are "at rest before they go home; possessors of that rest which remaineth even here for the people of God." It is with peculiar love and reverence that one comes to his closing days, and follows him to his last sermon at Leather-

head, on the words, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near"; and watches by his triumphant death-bed, and hears him say, "The clouds drop fatness." The only one I can compare with him is Apostle Eliot, the missionary to the Indians, whose life is quaintly written by Cotton Mather. It used to be said in New England that the country was safe when Eliot was there. Hawthorne tells how the hero of *The Scarlet Letter* thought of Eliot in his racking agony. Of that great saint, worthy to stand with John Wesley, we read that he was a man of infinite serenity. His face shone with an almost supernatural radiance. But he had his bitter sorrows. His sons died before him. They were "desirable preachers of the Gospel," but we are told that he sacrificed them "with such a sacred indifferency." He was so nailed to the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that the grandeurs of this world were to him just what they would be to a dying man. When, at a great age, and nearing the end, at last, he grew, like Wesley,

still "more heavenly, more savoury, more Divine, and scented more and more of the spicy country at which he was ready to put ashore."

The application of all this is very obvious. I, for one, believe the ancient word, "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." But first there must fall on the earth the blood shed from faithful souls. There is no life save from the parting with natural life. Some young men whom I love have plans for the evangelising of the world in the present generation. Yes, but what is evangelising? The sending of Bibles; the delivery of the Message to every one? No, but the shedding of the servants' blood on every field. When the world has become one great Gethsemane, we shall see over it all the flowers that grow, and grow only, in the garden where Christ's brow dropped blood. But this morning some sweet mother will go through her Gethsemane and give her son. Said one in weeds, when asked if she subscribed to a missionary society,

"Yes, I gave my only son, and he died on the field." Some heart will hear me to-day, and answer to the call, and pass through its Gethsemane in this chapel, and return to open itself to the influx of the life of the Holy Spirit, and depart to years of mighty words and deeds. May it be so! I have heard it said that your people die well. Surely, of this death to the world of which I have been speaking this morning, those words of Charles Wesley's are most of all appropriate—

> Ah, lovely appearance of death;
> What sight upon earth is so fair?

For us who remain there is a message. The service will be over in a moment; there will be a collection. You will put your hand in your pocket and pick out a small coin, thinking of what you are to spend in other ways before you get home. You will not miss it, not know that you have given it. Your missionary magazine will come to you, and you will look at it, or perhaps you will complain that those missionary periodicals are

so dull. And you think that the world will be converted after this fashion! No, the Church of Christ must be in an agony, praying more earnestly, sweating, as it were, great drops of blood, before the world can be brought to Christ. We give nothing, until we give what it costs us to give, life. There is no life without death. Gethsemane is the rose garden of God.

THE WATERSHED

We preach Christ crucified.[1]—1 Cor. i. 23.

These words gather in a strange and terrible accord men whose differences are infinite. We preach Christ crucified—so much all who believe that Christ ever existed may say. But some take the phrase as it stands, and put a full stop at the close. They say it is a historical fact that Christ was crucified on the Cross, and that upon the Cross His life and work were ended. We who use the phrase as St. Paul used it, consider it in a very different manner. But it is a fact that the modern mind finds it easier to believe in the Cross than in the resurrection. The Cross, they say, does not involve a faith in the supernatural, but the

[1] Dedicatory sermon of the New Wesleyan Methodist Hall, Edinburgh. Preached on Thursday morning, October 17, 1901.

resurrection is a stumbling-block, an impossible break in the natural order. That Christ died upon the Cross, amid the jeers of Jew and Roman, is true, and nothing to be wondered at, for many righteous men, before and since, have suffered after the same manner. It is foolishness, however, to suppose that He was able to shatter the iron gates of death.

We preach Christ crucified. The phrase may be described as a watershed, and I will illustrate its different uses from a poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes :—

Behold the rocky wall
That down its sloping sides
Pours the swift rain-drops, blending, as they fall
In rushing river-tides!

Yon stream, whose sources run
Turned by a pebble's edge,
Is Athabasca, rolling toward the sun
Through the cleft mountain-ledge.

The slender rill had strayed,
But for the slanting stone,
To evening's ocean, with the tangled braid
Of foam-flecked Oregon.

So from the heights of will
Life's parting stream descends,
And, as a moment turns its slender rill,
Each widening torrent bends,—

From the same cradle's side,
From the same mother's knee,—
One to long darkness and the frozen tide,
One to the Peaceful Sea!

Let me trace briefly the courses of the two streams. "We preach Christ crucified" on one side, and on the other "We, risen and crucified, preach Christ Divine, crucified, risen."

I

It is the word Divine which turns the course. The essence of heresy is the assertion that Christ is a creature. No matter how loftily He may be conceived of, if His Deity is denied the end is the long darkness and the frozen tide.

(1) We begin with Arianism, which seems, at first sight, to grant so much that it is barely distinguishable from Christianity. It affirms that Christ existed before He became

Incarnate, that by Him God made the worlds, that He is, in a manner, to be worshipped, that He wrought miracles, and that He rose from the dead. But it affirms also that He had a beginning of existence, that He was created by God, that, being created by God, He could be annihilated by God. This conception of Christ was held at one time by many powerful intellects, and has at least one living representative who must be regarded with deep respect. Yet it is fair to say that it has practically no place in the actual world of thought.

(2) The stream descends, and we find it next as Socinianism, or, as it is now called, Unitarianism. Those who have read Socinus may be astonished to find how exalted is the place he accords to Christ. He differs from Arius in holding that Christ had no pre-existence, that His life began with His mortal birth. But he maintains that Christ was born of a virgin, that He was the Immaculate Son of God, that in a sense He is worthy of our homage, that He wrought miracles in

the world, and visibly conquered death. Within living memory Unitarians made similar affirmations.

(3) But this, so far as I am aware, can no longer be said. The disciples of Socinus began to maintain that Christ would be more powerful if He were freed from the bandages of the supernatural. So gradually miracle was denied. The truth of the resurrection was volatilised, or openly rejected. Christ, it was said, shared the lot of the departed, and left His body to become Syrian dust. Still, for a long time a strenuous effort was made to maintain His sinlessness. "I know not," said Channing, "what can be added to the wonder, reverence, and love that belong to Jesus." It was held that He towered over the rest of mankind in His moral and spiritual perfection, that He was the true Leader of faithful souls. I think it would be correct to say that this view is taken to-day by some representative Unitarians, including Stopford Brooke. But it has become clear to the majority that a sinless man is a miracle, and that if the order

of law is to remain inviolate, Christ must be, in another sense, numbered with the transgressors.

(4) So the stream still descends. When the miracles are denied, when the resurrection becomes incredible, when the sinlessness is seen to be impossible, the question comes, How are we to estimate Christ's character? Many would still say that Christ was the greatest of the prophets, meaning not only that He said the most memorable and precious things, but that He said them from the noblest of natures. But the more the actual phenomena of the Gospels are investigated, the more it will be seen that if what have been called the enormous personal pretensions of Christ cannot be vindicated, He is below and not above the level of humanity. Francis Newman was tempted to call Him a conscious and wilful impostor. He could not recognise Him as really simple and straightforward, and put Fletcher of Madeley, Wesley's designated successor, far above Him in point of character. I confess that Renan's conclusion seems to me

by far the most logical. His apologies for Christ are far more appalling than his accusation, but on his own premises he is compelled to recognise that Christ was a schemer as well as a dreamer. A certain shrinking holds most critics back, but it is significant enough that one declares that Jesus is no part of His own Gospel, while another finds the historical proof of His existence in what he evidently takes for tokens and acknowledgments of mortal frailty.

(5) Can the stream go lower? Yes. So desperate is the problem of the character of Christ as viewed by rationalistic criticism, that some have strenuously and ably argued that He has never existed at all. I cannot but think that this position will be much more widely adopted by the critics who deny the supernatural. Beside such a Christ as they conceive, the Christ of the Gospels is credible and simple. The criticism that will not on any terms accept the Divine Christ will find it easiest to deny that there ever was any Christ, easiest to affirm that He is a mere

figment of the imagination, and to adopt the prophecy, "the time will come when no heart shall remember that the Saviour suffered and died for the world. The last believer shall go down in darkness to his grave, and from that hour shall Golgotha vanish away from the earth, like the place where the Garden of Eden lay."

One to long darkness and the frozen tide.

II

The other stream turns another way, and ends in another rest. We, risen and crucified, preach Christ, Divine, crucified, and risen. The Divinity, or, rather, the Deity, is the dividing line. Christ was uncreated, not only the Son of God, but God the Son. He was perfectly and purely God, and as truly and really man. The Church lives only as she holds fast to this fact, and she knows it. No definitions or descriptions, theological or other, can do more than touch the fringe of His splendour. But, if we are to understand the

preaching of Christ crucified, we must fill every word and every thought with the full meaning of Deity which belongs to the name of Christ. The more we do this, the more gloriously the river will expand and end. I can but touch on one or two points.

(1) It is the Deity of Christ which gives meaning to His atonement. We must not shrink from the strongest words that Scripture uses; rather we must glory in them. The Church of God has been purchased by the blood of God. Whenever we preach Christ, whenever we sit at His Table, we show forth the Lord's death. It is the Deity of Christ that gave His death its significance in regard to sin. The blood of man could not put away sin any more than the blood of bulls and goats could. It was the blood of the God-man that finished transgression and made an end of sin. The mind of the new century may reject for a time the substitutionary sacrifice of Emmanuel. The modern mind will always reject the miserable theory that the death of another martyr can do anything to help the world in

its plight of sin and guilt. Christ died as man, but He died as God. He laid down His life for us. He had power to lay it down, and He used that power. It was not the nails that held Him to the Tree, but the bonds and cords, the ancient prophecies and mysteries of love. He died as Victim, but He also died as Priest. The Lord reigned from the Tree. Where the word of a king is, there is power, and the word of the King was heard from the Cross, where He taught, indeed, as One having authority. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was the first prayer of the Immaculate Lamb from the Altar, and surely it is answered in every forgiven soul among us. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." When He spoke that promise He dismissed the cherubim with the flaming sword, and opened the road to the Tree of Life, opened it to one poor thief in the last hour of His mortal trial. Verily the day of His power was the day of His Cross. So we look to Him and see in His Cross not the example of a meek martyr, not a moral

influence, but an actual and irreversible triumph, the bringing in of a new order, the ending of the old. No man Christ, no angel Christ, no half-Divine Christ could suffice us. The Christ Who suffered and died for us yielded Himself of His royal will in sacrifice that He might restore His guilty people to the lost rank and franchises of the sons of God. So by faith we lay our hands on His dear Head and confess our sins. Believing, we rejoice to see the curse removed. The truth is gloriously set forth in many of your Methodist hymns.

O Jesus my Hope,
For me offered up,
Who with clamour pursued Thee to Calvary's top.
The Blood Thou hast shed,
For me let it plead,
And declare Thou hast died in Thy murderer's stead.

Or,

His death is my plea;
My Advocate see,
And hear the Blood speak that hath answered for me.

(2) Nor is the Deity of Christ less important when we consider the relation of His

death to human suffering. The sense of sin may be weak, but the sense of pain was never stronger than it is now. The springs of sorrow are full to the very lips. Lightness of heart has gone out of us, and the monotone of sadness is to be heard in most of our noblest literature. We are already far past the optimism of even thirty years ago. If you tell a man that Christ was the chief of the noble army of martyrs, he will answer that you have merely increased his difficulty and despair. Of old time unbelievers assumed that the heart of things was righteous and tender. It is this assumption that nowadays men will not make. They must have a proof that it is so, and the only proof that will suffice them is that God Himself became partaker of our suffering. The Titan of modern literature was prescient when he said, "If I were God the woes of the world would break my heart." The only answer that can be given is that the woes of the world did break God's heart when He died upon the Cross. The line of martyrs has stretched

so long and so far that men demand from us the news of the Suffering that hallows all sufferings, the Sacrifice which consecrates all sacrifices. The optimism of Browning's—

> God's in His heaven,
> All's right with the world,

falls on deaf ears to-day. If God is merely in His heaven, all is wrong with the world. It is our business not to abandon but to expand the great truth that God in Christ suffered and died to take away our suffering and our death. The gospel to the generation of sufferers is that the sufferings of His people were the thorns in the crown which Christ wore as a fair mitre; and that these sufferings ended when they clasped the Sacred Head.

I might give many illustrations of the trend of deeper thought, but two must suffice. Whatever we may think of Ibsen and Wagner, no one can deny that they have profoundly meditated on the tragedy of the world, and that they have affected to an extraordinary degree

the mind of humanity. Wagner has been taunted by two famous critics, both unbelievers, with his continual dwelling on redemption. The one idea that remained with him, and pursued him all his life, was the idea of redemption. Of Ibsen it has been said that three ideas dominated his thinking and writing—original sin, the sense of guilt, and redemption. The same critic, Max Nordau, says: "The most important theological obsession of Ibsen is the saving act of Christ, the redemption of the guilty by a voluntary acceptance of their guilt. This devolution of sin upon a Lamb of Sacrifice occupies the same position in Ibsen's drama as it does in Richard Wagner's." I take this to mean that these searching thinkers, not content with the shallow versions of Christianity, sought for the deep mystery of the universe unveiled in Christ the Lord.

(3) The resurrection can only be understood as the resurrection of the God-man. If Christ had been less than God, I could understand the force of many difficulties. If He

was God, it was not possible that He should be holden of death. It was not possible that He should see corruption. He laid down His life of His own will, and of His own will He took His life again. Three days and three nights He was to lie in the grave, but for the elect's sake the days were shortened, and very early in the morning He burst the bonds of the tomb. Nor could the God-man rise for Himself alone—

> Among the sleeping dead alone He woke,
> And blessed with outstretched hands the host around.

Did He hear them say in their slumber, "Think of me, I pray Thee, when it shall be well with Thee, and speak for me unto the King, that He may bring me out of this prison." "Draw me; we will run after Thee." He heard, understood, remembers, and at the voice of the Archangel these little hills in the churchyard will one day rejoice on every side. This is the end, then, of the stream—

> One to the Peaceful Sea.

III

But we must say a word on the preachers of this Gospel. We, risen and crucified, preach Christ Divine, crucified, risen. Note the order—risen and crucified. It is the order of St. Paul: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." Not the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection, but first the power and then the fellowship. When we believe in the risen Christ there flows into us the strength and joy of His Spirit, the power of His resurrection. It is this power of His resurrection that is the chief token of the supernatural Church to the world. With profound insight, Ibsen, in his drama, makes Julian apostatise because he misses joy in the Christian religion. "To thee I make my offering, O Dionysus, God of Ecstasy, who dost lift up the souls of mortals out of abasement, and ennoble them." The Church of every time is tempted to forget that all its doing and all its suffering are to

be met in the power of His resurrection. The

> Dim perplexities and hopes that wane,
> Doubt and the ghastly riddle, sin and pain.

These we are to encounter in the power of His resurrection. Our own difficulties of faith we are to meet in the power of His resurrection. Our own frequent failures and humiliations and trials in work we are to meet in the power of His resurrection. Our own personal griefs of missing faces and loosened hands we must bear in the power of His resurrection. The unbelieving world we must confront in the power of His resurrection. Whatever there may be of indifference, of hostility, of persecution, we have to meet them all in the power of His resurrection, and be made more than conquerors through Him that loved us. You see, I have been describing the fellowship of His sufferings, which means each bearing the Cross after Jesus. The world demands to see that Cross. Except it beholds the print of the nails it will not believe. It has no call to believe in any

Christianity that does not involve crucifixion. But the world must not see us staggering under our crosses. It must not see us broken-hearted, weak and weary. It must see that we are in the fellowship of His sufferings, and that we are supported in that fellowship by a supernatural power. So we, risen and crucified, preach Christ Divine, crucified, and risen.

One word on the special circumstances in which we meet—the opening of this noble hall. I have once and again expressed my growing conviction that the Methodists have shown the way to other churches. Our great central places of worship must ultimately be worked on these lines, or close. Already I have seen the magnificent work accomplished in London, in Manchester, in Birmingham, and elsewhere. I believe the work must greatly extend, and that it will prove one of the most fruitful branches of Christian service. I rejoice in the success that God has given to the workers here, and fully believe that by His blessing this noble build-

ing will become a home of souls, that its influence will extend over this great city, over the country, over the world. Your mission is to the Church, to the world, and, not least, to the church outside the churches. You have recognised that this is a great and growing church—the company of men and women who set their hope in Christ, and seek to keep His commandments, and yet remain outside the organised churches, and complain that they find no refreshment and no aid in their services. This class includes, I believe, by far the larger number of the intellectual influences in this country, and the number grows. It includes, I believe, multitudes of our intelligent working men. You have a mission to the apathetic world. We hear it said continually that the danger is indifference, that people do not care, that they get on very well without religion. When such halls as these are opened I have observed that the people crowd to them. But however this may be, if we are to awaken people, we must first awaken God. We must fall back

on the suppliant almightiness of prayer. We complain of the decline in candidates for the ministry, and remedies are suggested. But I have not seen it stated that Christ faced the same difficulty, and met it in His own way. Said He, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." There is a decline of candidates for the ministry. What then? "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." What would be thought if you had a week of prayer meetings to plead with God on this subject? Would no one attend? More than you think would attend. More will be done in that way than by giving better salaries and better education. But prayer is no easy thing—prevailing prayer. We must waken the Lord. For this He will be enquired of. He says, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days." Nor will He wake at once. He will refuse till we ask Him more earnestly. He says, "Let Me go," that we may answer, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless

me." He says, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs," that we may reply, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

> Oh! how strangely thou eludest
> Those, dear Lord, that have believed!
> Yet eluding, ne'er deludest,
> Nor deceiv'st, nor art deceived!

We must waken God before we waken the dim sunken masses. What Savonarola cried in the crisis of his church I would repeat, "Wake Christ! Wake Christ!"

THE MESSAGE FOR MIDNIGHT[1]

A friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.—LUKE xi. 6.

THESE words many of us must have often felt to be deeply applicable to our own plight. The time is midnight, the suppliant is our friend. We are linked to him by that sad tie of brotherhood which unites us poor human beings, strong only in our power to suffer. The friend is on his journey, he is a wayfarer. He is, like us, a traveller on this troublesome, rough road of life. Wearied and bleeding and burdened, he urges his request at midnight. Now, it is easy to find a gospel for the morning, but the morning is itself a gospel. It is easy to find a gospel for the noon, the time of the greatest brilliance and deepest

[1] Annual sermon of the National Free Church Council, preached at Bradford, Tuesday, March 11, 1902.

glow of existence, when the business of life and the pursuit of pleasure absorb all our thoughts. But the day wears on to evening. We fight at first with what arms we can command, what we can wield best, the lightest, and the quickest, and the most baffling. But at last we see that we are fighting in vain, and midnight overcomes us. We are suddenly brought face to face with the limits of human strength. We find that we are not gods, but only men. Then with a heart that is worn, and has transmitted its weariness to the face, we plead with our friend. The friend is stricken with impotence. With a sudden rush of helpless pity, he realises that he has nothing to set before the wayfarer who has reached the midnight which seems the end, the midnight in which no morrow buds.

But Christianity is the religion for midnight. Midnight in Holy Scripture is the hour of God's great interpositions and deliverances. At midnight the children of Israel were led out with a high hand. At midnight the angel of the Lord smote the camp of the Assyrians.

At midnight the iron gate opened of his own accord. At midnight the prisoners heard Paul and Silas singing. At midnight the Lord of Life woke in the rocky grave and said, "I will arise and go to My Father." As it is written, "At midnight I will rise and give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments." When He had given thanks, He broke the bars of iron and shattered the gates of death. And at midnight we who preach Christ can preach to whosoever seeks us the delivering God. That is what we have to set before the pleading wayfarer at midnight. We have to set before him God the Father. We have gone back, many of us, from the simplicity of our message. It is written that Christ died, the Righteous for the unrighteous. To what end? That He might bring us to God. The whole object of the Redeemer's work, His dying, His rising, His ascension, His intercession, is to bring men to God the Father. It is when we are brought to God that the fever leaves us, and we are at rest. Too much have we preached, many of us, not the

Giver, but the gifts. The soul cries out, "Not Thine, but Thee." Let us come to the feet of God the Father, and all is well. We cannot have the gifts without the Giver, yet we are often tempted to believe that it is possible. We are tempted to rest in lower, more intelligible interpretations of Christ's work, but they are incomplete. There can be no end short of this—that He might bring us to God. God is the answer to all prayer, the supply of all need.

It is unnecessary to spend much time in describing the midnights of the soul. They are midnights of remorse, of sorrow, of despair. It is midnight when our thousand hopes die together at one blow of fate. It is midnight when our landmarks change, when great shadows blot and chill the world, when a sudden darkness falls on all things. These midnights seem completely to overthrow not only our natural strength, but even the defences of our faith. But if Christ brings us to God the morning breaks and triumphs.

I

We read in the Romance of Grace the words, "Thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." The order is a true order. To bring home the lost is a greater and harder thing by far than to raise the dead. Dr. Dale wrote to Archbishop Tait a letter of consolation on his son's death, in which he said that it was so much better to lose a child by death than to lose one by sin. We all understand this, but for the present let us take sin and death in the order of time. What can we say to the friend, the wayfarer who comes to us in the midnight of sin? Let us learn from the story of the Prodigal Son. We have told, and we have done right to tell, what Christ accomplished when, as Priest and as Victim, He offered up the evening sacrifice of the world. We have preached how in His substitutionary offering He released His believers from the guilt, the penalty, and the power of sin. We have discussed as theologians, and we have done

well to discuss, the meaning of forgiveness. We have tried to discover how far forgiveness means the release from consequences, the breaking of the close-linked chain. Yes, but there is a simpler and deeper word than any of these. Christ by His living and dying brings us to God. We are forgiven when we are brought to God. Salvation is the meeting between the prodigal son and the loving Father. When they meet, when the sinner's lips are kissed into a sweet silence, when his words are hushed in a great burst of forgiving love—that is forgiveness. In other words, forgiveness is reconciliation. If we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son all is done for us, all is well. There is no fear of any future.

> Say nothing of pardon, the darkness has gone.
> Shall pardon be asked for the night by the sun?
> No word of the past, of the future no fear,
> 'Tis enough, my beloved, to know thou art here.

That is what our Father says to us. He ran a great way to meet us, even to the Cross. When He meets us His love thrills through

every fibre of our souls, and wraps us in a warm mist of dreams, dreams that come true. Or rather, it is the golden hour when dreams and fears alike end at the touch of reality. Well may the curtain fall. Even amongst ourselves when we forgive—and I think a true forgiveness of man by man is always a mutual forgiveness—we feel that in a true sense the end has been reached. In William Blake's words—

> Therefore through all eternity
> I forgive you, you forgive me.
> As our dear Redeemer said,
> This the Wine, and this the Bread.

But you may ask what comes after the hour of rapture and rest? When the prodigal and his father waken on the morrow, they will have to face many things. They will have, it may be, to face them and to fight them even to the grave. Many days the world will seem covered with a chill hopelessness. Think how one result after another will come out of the wasteful, wicked past. The bills will come in, and must be settled somehow. Retribution

will arrive, physical and spiritual, to the agony and surprise of both. They will ask a hundred times whether God can be persuaded to lay His hand on the great millstones that grind and grind eternally, as it seems. Will He unwind the coil of circumstance and make things be as if they had never been? Yes, it is all true, but what has happened is that the father and the child are friends. Now they meet the consequences together as they best may. Love transforms and redeems all things. If this is true in earthly forgiveness, and we know it is, how much more true it is of Divine forgiveness! It is God and the Father and the erring child who have to meet what comes, and there is no fear. They have to face the elder brother and worse enemies by far, more bitter, more irreconcilable. But two face them, and one of the two is God, and if God be for us who can be against us? What will God do, what will He not do to revive, purify, and save the soul that has trusted and loved His Son? He will give us no more to bear than it is needful we should bear, and He will

give us His strength for endurance. It will be enough for us to know that the Father is reconciled, and that hand in hand we are undoing the past and making the future. So I say let us preach to the friend at midnight the love of God the Father. It is from the fountain of His love that Christ's Atonement came. The Son Himself, Who was free indeed, came to do the Father's will, "that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do," He said as He arose and went thence. He has not done His work upon us until He has brought us to the Father's feet, until He can say, "Of those that Thou hast given Me I have lost—NONE."

I cannot but think that the present type of Christianity is in many respects short of the Old Testament type. How often do we find in these days the passion that thrills through the Psalms, the delight in God apart from all His gifts? "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and

thirsty land, where no water is; to see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary. . . . I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night-watches. . . . My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me." To find God, to enjoy God—that is our all in all.

II

What is true of the midnight of sin is true of the midnight of death. The Christian thought is that death brings us and our God together. The literature of Christian consolation, especially in recent times, has done little justice to this great truth. It has dwelt upon death as the knitter of severed ties, as the restorer of those loved long since and lost awhile. It has contemplated death as the severer. We know how the heart craves for such comfort, and we know that such comfort is true and Divine, but we wrong ourselves and we wrong the Father when we think of death first as bringing us to our beloved.

The sting of death is drawn when we know that death brings us to God. Yet let us dwell on the error, if error it is, gently. We have experienced the fearful sense of the irrevocable that death brings with it. Most of us have known how all love and all tenderness seem turned to dust and ashes, mocked by the ghost of sweet things dead. We know how the heart is torn with passionate longing, passionate regret. Flavour and savour go out of life. I cannot explain how it is, but for most of us it is true that no pleasure is attainable, save through those we love. It may be we have longed for many things, for all the good gifts that the world holds. After years of frustration our moment of triumph comes. The river of pleasure runs to our feet, and it is full of water. Yet somehow it never reaches us. Even if it bore with it the offerings of the universe it would be of no avail. We stand by the stream still athirst. Its waters are beyond the reach of our lips. They are abundant, but we have no cup wherewith to stoop down and drink. It was

for a mother, a wife, a child, that we were working. It was for their sakes that we craved reward and recognition. They are gone, and the recognition means nothing to us. We long for the earlier days, when there was for us but a scanty rivulet, but we had our cup to drink from it. The desire has been achieved, perhaps beyond the dream of our earlier ambition, but we were happier far in the days of struggle. Says a bereaved father, "When the last long breath was drawn, and the limp, deserted body was all that was left to me of my thirteen years of passionate devotion, my pride and hope, and the nursing care of so many years, I walked out into the midnight, and left my boy to death. It was only a child's death, a common thing—almost as common as family existence—but it gave a new colour to my life, established for ever a sympathy with the common grief and a community of sorrow with all bereft fathers and mothers in the premature dissipation of the hopes of their future, and the lapse of a dear companionship into the eternal void. This is

the human brotherhood of sorrow, sacred, ennobling, sanctifying where it abides, the deepest lesson in the school of life. My feet have wandered far, and my thoughts still farther, from the place and beliefs of my childhood, but whatever and wherever I may be, this grief at times catches me and holds me in a pause of dumb tears. I have never been able to find a consolation for that loss, for it carried with it the future and its best dreams." The Word of God meets us with an answer to this need. If it had not met us, it would have been no Word of God. Love wanders to every desert and calls to every sea and knocks at every grave, and demands its own back again, and God, Who is love, cannot, will not, dare not refuse. Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. We can preach all that, and preach it from our hearts, but death brings us first of all to Christ and to God. I am afraid that modern preaching has led many to think of a future blessed life in which God is as much in the background as He is here. There is, I am sure, a belief that

in the next world the relations between ourselves and our beloved will be brought to a perfection of tenderness and security, and God will lie in the distance, still the background, still the helper, still the answerer of prayer, and nothing nearer. We need more than that. Lowell wrote in his youth of the lost ones—

> Whose comin' step ther' 's ears thet won't
> No, not lifelong leave off awaitin'.

And he lived to say, "'Who knows?' and 'Do I *really* wish it may be?' are all the nineteenth century has left us of the simple faith we began life with."

The faith in immortality will never be maintained without a lively faith in God the Father. In the New Testament to depart is to be with Christ, which is very far better. We know that when He shall be manifested we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The veils of time and sense and distance will be done away, and we shall see face to face. It is He Who will meet us on the further shore with His own most blessed

words, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I—Myself." We shall find our dead alive again, alive in Him. Nor is that enough. He will bring us to God, and God's love will draw us closer and closer into its warm folds. The great thought of the future is, as the Bible and the saints and the doctors have told us, the Beatific Vision—that Beatific Vision which we can name indeed, but beyond naming can do no more. Nay, St. Paul tells us of an end, the end of ends, when the Son Himself is made subject to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all.

I have no time to point out how terrible the conception of immortality without God would be. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever. But again I ask if we have not descended, many of us, even from the level of the Old Testament. Who of us can say with full sincerity of heart, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside Thee"? St. Paul could have answered. For him to

live was Christ, and to die was gain, because to die meant to have more of Christ. He looked for his loved ones, like the rest of us. He looked to see them transfigured in the glow of the soft eternal sunshine: but to St. Paul his dear ones were robed and homed in Christ, and it was for Christ, for God that he waited. If we love as he loved, we shall find as he found that the change from grace to glory is less by far than the change from nature to grace. In Russia and in the great North lands I have read that sunset is almost in the north, and the sunrise takes it by the hand. In St. Paul's triumphant dying the rose of evening became suddenly and silently the rose of dawn. And so, dear brethren, let us preach God the Father. "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"

"I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH"[1]

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said . . . thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.—MATT. xvi. 16, 18.

THE words were drawn from Christ by the confession of Peter. The disciple said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and the Saviour answered, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

I

In many lives, by no means in all, the purpose for which life was given, for the fulfilment of which life is to be spent, dis-

[1] Annual sermon of the Central Presbyterian Association, preached in Belfast, April 13, 1902.

engages itself in one lustrous moment. The clouds are scattered, and the meaning of life is written as with a pencil of lightning. This does not mean that all is new. A man may, in the depths of his feeling and thought, be aware of his place and work, and yet things change when the significance of his destiny crystallises itself in a sentence. As Browning makes Childe Roland say—

> Burningly it came on me all at once,
> This was the place!

So men have said to themselves in one of these moments that count as years in a lifetime, these moments when mists lift off—I will make this discovery—I will write this book—I will love this woman—I will serve this cause—I will extend this Empire. It is as if they had suddenly turned and seen the revealing angel. So our Lord, Who from the beginning knew His work, put everything into the words—"I will build My Church." He had been building it in a sense from before the foundation of the world. He had been building it

in those years of toil and sacrifice. He went on to build it till He died. Now that He has risen from the dead, and ascended far above all heavens, He is building it still. He will go on building it to the end of the ages, till the temple stands most worthy, and integral, and fair before the eyes of God, and angels, and men. "I will build My Church." If you read the Gospels carefully you will see with what strictness of application our Lord used the word "My." He never said "My house," "My lands," "My books," "My wife," "My child." He said, "My Father," "My friends," "My disciples." When we think of it we shall see that His true possessions were His Father and his Church, "My Father," "My Church." The mystics laid great stress on that verse—"The kingdom of Heaven is like unto a man who made a marriage for his son." That is, as they interpreted it, the marriage was not made for the bride, but for the bridegroom. As if out of His great humility the Son of God vouchsafed to require this to complete His blessedness, that

He should have His spotless bride to share it. "The marriage of the Lamb is come"; these are inspired words which describe the consummation.

II

Let us ask how Christ builds His Church. I shall borrow from Ruskin's famous book, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. As Ruskin himself says: "We know not how soon all architecture will be vain, except that which is not made with hands." I take three of his seven lamps to help us in expounding how Christ builds His Church, how we must build it, if we are to be labourers together with Him. In the first place, there is the Lamp of Sacrifice. The Church is built on sacrifice, and by sacrifice. It is built on the one Sacrifice offered for sins for ever, and built by the continual sacrifice of the members, on the sacrifice which will make up at last that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ. We may, and do, greatly misconceive the meaning of sacrifice. We are apt to think

that sacrifice is that which cuts athwart the path of liking and inclination. When we are performing for the sake of some principle or some person a labour which is uncongenial, we readily suppose ourselves to be in the path of true sacrifice. But if we are constantly engaged from childhood unto death in a labour that we detest, we may be very sure that the task was not ours at all, that God never meant us to accomplish it. Sacrifice, in the true sense, is doing our work with delight, but doing it perfectly, carrying it to the utmost. Before we can carry it to the utmost the element of agony is sure to come in. Ruskin says that the difference between ancient work and modern work is that all old work nearly has been hard work, the work of those who have gone to the extremity of their power. Modern work, on the other hand, has the look of money's worth, of a lazy compliance with low conditions, and not the full putting out of strength. There is an immense significance in the expression "taking pains." Up to a certain point work

is a joy, but the true worker arrives at a place where he knows that his work is unfinished, and that in order to finish it there must be the racking and straining of all his faculty—in other words, sacrifice. A man of genius, an artist in words or colours, may be able, without effort, to do a book or picture very passably. He may yield to the temptation of doing no more. He may put his creation before the public, and receive a modicum of applause, and be content with that. But in his own heart he is self-condemned. He should have burned the book or the picture and started afresh, if he saw that it was incomplete and unsatisfactory. If he saw that it was incomplete, but moving towards perfection, he would have perfected it through agony and bloody sweat. Always it is taking pains that crowns you. It is the last painful hour that saves your work, the hour spent at the full stretch of being. Always complete concentration is an agonising concentration. So our Lord came with delight to do the will of the Father. "I delight to do Thy will, O my

God; yea, Thy law is within My heart." And up to a certain day in His days He had His share of pleasures. His life was full of thoughts, and interests, and trials, and heart-breakings, but it had in it also recoveries and joyfulness of success. At last He came within the sight of the Cross. Might He not have turned aside and away? Might He not have said—"I have done enough; I have spoken lovely and true words that will tell on the universe for ever. I have healed the sick, I have raised the dead, I have cast out devils; freely I have received, freely I have given, and there is no need of more." If He had spoken so He would have been still a great, though enigmatic figure in human history. He could not have been dethroned from a place amongst the prophets, but He would have left His people unredeemed, and His work undone. So He went on, but He went on to Calvary through Gethsemane. There came to Him the cup, brimming with tribulation. In Gethsemane, as the low whisper of the winds ran along the trees, there mingled

with it the sound of strong cries, and of the awful prayer, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done." The will of God was done, and it was His will. He must drink the cup to the last drop, hold it up reversed, and empty. Yes, it had to be. To save us He had to be made a curse for us, for the sins of His guilty people He trod the winepress alone, and bore the weight of the Divine wrath. If He had not done so, He could have built no Church. He might have left admirers, a school, a sect, anything but a Church. And so the Lamp of Sacrifice shone upon all His way.

In the second place, there is the Lamp of Power. We see it shining in these calm words, "I will build My Church." Says the French aphorist: "Attempt difficult things as though they were easy, and easy things as though they were difficult." Christ addressed Himself to His long and terrible task with a certain repose of mind and temper. He was filled with the Spirit. He had the Sword of

the Spirit, which is the Word of God. To Christ the minister of the Sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man, the problem presented itself as it presented itself to all His faithful servants in every age. How is the heart of man to be penetrated? There is, says Ruskin, a crust about the impressible part of men's minds which must be pierced through before they can be touched to the quick, and though we may prick at it and scratch it in a thousand separate places, we might as well have left it alone if we did not go through somewhere with a deep thrust. And if we can give such a thrust anywhere, there is no need of another. It need not even be so wide as a church door, so that it be enough. Three things—the point of attack, the sword, the power of the Spirit. The sword is the Word of God, but even with the Word we can do nothing without the Spirit, and we need, as Christ needed, no common or restrained portion of the Spirit. It was hard for Him even to thrust through to the heart, and time and

storm and sorrow have set their wild signatures on all His true messengers. And yet without the Lamp of Power the building of the Church is impossible, alike to Master and servant. Yet such is the power, that we are not to be dismayed. We believe in the Holy Ghost—therefore we are always confident. The word "cannot" should be struck from the Christian vocabulary. "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me" by His Spirit.

Once more, there must be the Lamp of Beauty. He will present it to Himself a glorious Church, for if the Church is to be fair with the beauty of the Lord, love and joy must go into the building. "We are not sent into the world to do anything into which we cannot put our hearts." Unless we put our hearts into our building we cannot put our intellects. And it may be true, as the great critic has said, that "objects are noble and ignoble in proportion to the amount of the energy of the mind which has visibly been employed upon them." We know what heart

Christ put into the building of His Church. The zeal of God's House consumed Him. It was His meat to do the will of the Father, and to finish His work. In the old days men and women put their souls into church building. A French writer describes the rebuilding of Chartres Cathedral after its destruction by fire. All the country over, every one grieved and wept. Whole populations stopped their regular work, left their homes to help, the rich bringing money and jewels, and the poor putting in their barrows everything that could serve to feed labour and men, or help in the work. It was a constant stream of emigration, the spontaneous exodus of a people. Every road was crowded with pilgrims, all, men and women alike, dragging whole trees, pushing loads of sawn beams. What seems more incredible and is nevertheless attested by every chronicle of the time, is that this horde of old folks and children, of men and women, was at once amenable to discipline. And yet they belonged to every class of society, for there

were among them knights and ladies of high degree. But Divine love was so powerful that it annihilated distinctions and abolished caste. The nobles harnessed themselves with the labourers to drag the trucks. Patrician dames helped the peasant women to stir the mortar and to cook the food. The old Durham Cathedral was completed in a similar way. The entire population of the district, from the Coquet to the Tees, headed by the Earl of the Northumbrians, readily rendered all the help they could. We can tell to our own day of similar enterprises on humbler scales, where chapels have been built by the gratuitous labour of poor men in their scanty leisure. Christ has built His Church with joy unspeakable, and we can build it worthily with Him. He does not need us for the building. He said Himself, "I will build My Church." He will carry His banner on to victory, though the hands of all of us relax their hold. Perhaps our work may be nothing more than a discipline for our souls, and in itself useless. But, as Ruskin nobly

says, "Since our life must at the best be but a vapour that appears for a little time and then vanishes away, let it at least appear as a cloud in the height of heaven, not as the thick darkness that broods over the blast of the furnace, and rolling of the wheel." It needs all—sacrifice, power, joy. Always as Christ looked on to His triumph He foresaw His battle. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The Church was to be built, has been built, will be built, "'mid toil and tribulation and tumult of the war." He lived, and we live, in the shadow of the gates of hell. Sometimes we are impatient. The obstacles by this time, we say, should have vanished. But they are always there, and always will be there, till the victory is won. The gates of hell take different forms—sometimes animalism, sometimes indifference, sometimes intellectual disbelief, sometimes persecution, most often, perhaps, pharisaism. So again and again there have been reactions and defeats. Just as we think the end is come, we find that we have to begin over again. The unchanging

anxieties, the tangled difficulties remain. What wonder that Christ came in blood and lives among us in blood? *Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel?* This is the question which the modern mind is always addressing to Christ, and there is no question which His servants can answer with a fuller assurance. He stands with us before the tremendous fortress of the human soul and puts with us the question, *Who will bring Me into the strong city? Who will lead Me into Edom?* We must drink of His cup, we must be baptized with His baptism. He did not break down; He was not bewildered, yet He knew the stress of the struggle, and He can sympathise with us who, though planted in the likeness of His death, have not attained to the full likeness of His resurrection.

III

Why should not Christ's conception of life, "I will build My Church," be taken by the young men here to-day? First comes faith

in Christ, and then comes following. There is no nobler following than that of those whose life-purpose is put in the words, "I will build His Church." Among the most sacred and beautiful recollections of my life are those men and women of whom this could be said. They were the pillars of the churches I served in the ministry. They led active, loving lives outside, but the supreme thought was always the welfare of the Church. They could always be relied on; they were present when others were absent; they were generous when others were niggardly; they were brave when others were faint. I do not know what the Church would be without such. I remember one who lived till eighty, whose venerable presence was a benediction, who through all his years, under changes of ministry and the various fortunes of a community, was the strength and joy and inspiration of his fellow-worshippers. He literally died in the church, came to it one day in weakness, and was suddenly stricken with heart-disease, and passed away in a moment, fulfilling the words—

Yea, I will be found
Dead at the threshold of Thy mercy
With the ring of Thy door in my hand.

Through the blessing of God, we have in our churches men and women like these—all too few. Can the young men here give themselves to a better cause? Remember this is the cause, and the only cause, that will never betray what faith and love a man may give it. You attach yourselves to a political party, serve it through your most living and glowing years, and find that in the end it is impotent and shattered. Or, perhaps, you succeed in carrying the measure you set your heart on, and the result is a bitter disappointment. The law has been passed, but there is no diminution in the sin and misery of the world. How many faint and grow weary, and acquiesce dully at last in evils against which they set their young brows like a rock! Or you set yourself to win literary distinction, and you have your day, and others come and take your place, and the last years of your life are spent in obscurity. If your name is recalled at all,

it is with a contemptuous sneer. These aims break the heart. But a devotion to the Church of Christ will in no wise lose its reward, for the wonderful Church of Christ is the one thing on earth that does not die. Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, and His Church is not to die. Every kind of weapon has been tried against the Church—open attack, subtle solvent, all have done their work. Again and again it has seemed as if the Church has been overthrown. Men have spoken openly of the nearing end. They have talked of the long empire of Christ over the hearts of men as if it were a waning tyranny, but strong in the life of her Head she has always recovered, always adapted herself to new circumstances, always put forth fresh energies. No weapon formed against her has prospered, and as it has been, so it shall be, "I will build My Church."

Why should not you say, "I will build my Church—the Church in which I was born, where I first heard the Gospel, and believed it, the Church of my father and mother, the

Church where I first found my saints, and was led from the light of the moon to the light of the sun"? Why should you not say of that Church, "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God"? "Bone of your bone are we, and in death shall be dust of your dust." Any great and worthy life should be faithful to its past. Our great prophet, whom I have quoted so much, speaks indignantly of the time "when every man's past life is his habitual scorn, when men build in the hope of leaving the place they have built, and live in the hope of forgetting the years they have lived, when the comfort, the peace, the religion of home have ceased to be felt." Honour thy father and mother—living and dead. Many of us have lost them, but we are still the sons of parents who have passed into the skies, and we hope to meet them, and not be ashamed at the meeting. With what a pang would our fathers and mothers have thought of our forsaking the Church they

loved! You may rise in life, and I trust if it is God's will that you may. You will have a work to do; you may become rich, and famous, and powerful, but the success will yield little happiness if it is not loyally used. How well it would be if you took every fresh gift, every position which gave you new influence in the world, and used it for the Church; if you said, "This is my talent, and with this talent I will build my Church." It may be the talent of wealth, it may be the talent of eloquence, it may be the talent of literary power, or of skill in affairs. Christ needs them all, and they may all be hallowed by a devotion to His cause. Is it difficult? It may come to be difficult. Your Church may come to be despised. What then? It has all the more need of you—

> All are not lost and wandered back,
> All have not left Thy Church and Thee;
> There are who suffer for Thy sake,
> Enjoy Thy glorious infamy.

There will be trial days of weakness and dismay, but never a day when Christ will not

be there. And there is a special sweetness and strength in His presence when we can fall back on no other. Have you never felt how by one earnest and believing presence all is transformed and redeemed? The old emblems recover their first significance, the time-worn phrases glow with life again, and we ourselves are altered. If we are alone we are not alone, because He is with us, and He whispers, "The earth is weak, and all the inhabitants thereof. I bear up the pillars of it." I remember reading of an old Dissenting minister who was dying. The bells rang for church, and he looked up to his faithful wife and said, "Let the rest go; you will stay." They were his last words. They have often come to me in days of defection and faint-heartedness and apostasy, when it almost seemed as if every one was to go. He said then, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," and He was as good as His word. Alone in the African desert, surrounded by perils, Livingstone heard the Lord speaking it, and he says, "I took it as His word of

honour." You remember Luther's intense saying, "If the Lord God is to keep up His Church, He must care for it Himself. We cannot do it." He will take care of His Church: "I will build My Church." "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Let us fill our souls with these Divine assurances, and be brave. We turn round to the living Christ, "Let the rest go. You will stay."

THE LAMB'S WAR WITH THE BEAST[1]

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them.—REV. xvii. 14.

IT is strange that the most mysterious book of the Bible should be especially singled out as the Revelation. Yet though no book is less patient of a detailed and pedantic exposition, none is more full of the triumph and the tears of God's Word, none is richer in lessons to guide us in the stern and fluctuating conflict of our Lord with Satan. There is a roll of martyrs in the Christian Church, and over against it a roll of apostates. There are stories of great stones rolled to the door of sepulchres and removed by angel hands, of life and victory,

[1] Anniversary sermon of the London Wesleyan Methodist Mission, preached in City Road Chapel, London, Tuesday, March 17, 1903.

but also of failure and disappointment and every form of death. The battle is often pictured here as a war between the Lamb and the beast. The beast may be taken to denote the rebellion of the animal, the untamed, the sensual, the violent element, blatant and blasphemous. But what makes the beast as distinguished from the man is that there is no direct correspondence of the animal with God, and there never can be. What we have to consider in our day is that the beast may be tamed, and remain the beast. You may carry out social reform, give every one decent conditions of living, suppress to a great degree drunkenness and immorality, silence the scoffer, and yet be further from your goal than ever. A contented materialism is as far from God as the most rebellious infidelity, and may even be harder for the Christian preacher to deal with. Thus, in times within the memory of many among us, there was through the country a fierce and persistent propaganda of secularism. There were halls in our great towns where the Bible was mocked, where God and

His Christ were denied, where Christianity in its nature and effects was challenged as a baseless and mischievous superstition. Now, I believe these halls have been generally closed. If I am not mistaken, some of them are actually in use for the work of the London Wesleyan Methodist Mission. Let us thank God for that, so far as it means the victory of Christ; but it may mean, and in some cases it doubtless does mean, not a surrender to Christ, but a crass and dull indifference to the great questions of the soul. Let us never forget that some of the men who advocated secularism cared very much about religion. They were exercised by the problems of destiny. Often they were champions of justice and apostles of freedom, often they proved their sincerity by great sufferings and sacrifices. They have been missed in those years of creeping apathy, when it has seemed that in sections of the population the vision of the Ideal has ceased, and men have come to care nothing for that which is high, nothing for the old and kindling dreams of righteousness,

nothing for the Bible, nothing for the Saviour, nothing for the other world.

I

A powerful and painful little book, lately published, under the title, *From the Abyss*, sketches a typical working man, John Smith by name. The writer foresees a not distant day when by the help of the policeman and the Peabody buildings the ape and tiger instincts will be eliminated in man. He thinks that lives now insurgent and unconfined will become confined and acquiescent, that the block-dweller of the future will pass from the great deep to the great deep, vacant, cheerful, undisturbed by envy, aspiration, or desire. John Smith represents half a million people. He lives in a four-roomed cottage at Camberwell, with a wife and five children, and a lodger. Six days of the week he goes early to his work at brick-laying; he returns at night to his pipe and supper, and, perhaps, goes round to the public-house to hear the news. On Sunday he

sleeps late, but he has Sunday dinner, a stroll in Peckham Rye, and he closes his day with his companions at the "Blue Dragon." So long as work is good, and pay regular, he does not lift his voice in complaint. Intellectual interests he has none. He will not listen to lectures. He will read a newspaper, but the news does not stir him. He cannot be galvanised into utterance. He drifts to his work daily, dumbly contented if work is easy and lucrative, dumbly resentful if it is not, but dumb always. To the Churches he is practically invulnerable. He has no quarrel with religion, but what faith he has is merely in a Deity of universal tolerance. He is commonplace, respectable, and fairly virtuous. Yet he is an immortal spirit journeying between two eternities through a world of tragical meaning, to the significance of which he seems destined to be blind. There are, we are told, in this vast city hundreds of thousands of such, and the trouble about them is not that they are unhappy, but that being what they are they should be so happy. Against this

apparent death of the spiritual needs and cravings, against this life under the low sky, against this apparent numbness of heart and conscience the Lamb wages His war.

II

"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." This is our task—the awakening of the soul. How shall we do it? How shall we stir that heavy sleeper? How shall we rouse it into the tumult of yearnings and aspirings? How shall we break the force of the opiates that have drugged it till it seems dead, till the sole object in life seems to be to eat well, to drink well, to sleep well, to work as little as possible, and to keep out of the way of trouble? This is a harder task than to meet the soul awake and aware, clamorous, craving, exacting, rebellious, wild for home. Well, we will labour with all our might to destroy the social conditions that make a decent life impossible. Is it true that in many cases here in London

there is a strength of circumstance that even the Gospel cannot quell and dominate, cess-pools in which they who live must sin and perish? Is it true that there are thousands of children defrauded of their childhood, born to an inheritance of vice and wretchedness, damned from the beginning? We must change that at any cost, and that Church has strayed from the Master which is not in earnest sympathy and in mutual sacrifice with those inspired by a passion of pity to take away what Emerson calls this accursed mountain of sorrow. But as to the ultimate solution of the social question, I am not able to form an opinion. Under what circumstances this mortal life shall clothe itself when at last the will of God shall be done on earth even as it is in Heaven I do not know. I read eloquent and powerful arguments for this reconstruction of society and that, but I remain perplexed, seeing little beyond the next step. Our economists, our philosophers, our politicians have much to do ere they reach the goal. Christian thinkers ought to be amongst the

busiest in the investigation. May God hasten the end! You in your missions have wisely recognised a duty in this great business. You have seen that you are called to care for the whole life of the poor, that nothing is secular to the Christian worker, that every human being born into the world has a right to contentment and joy. These things you hold, not as abstract propositions, but with a sacred passion. But as Christians we go very much further. Our problem is not solved when every dweller in London has four rooms. The problem of John Smith would still remain to us. It would not be solved even if we could transfer the East End to the West End, or even if we could mingle and equalise the privileges and opportunities of the two. The deliverance from materialism is not to be achieved in this manner, and it is the deliverance from materialism that we supremely care for. I come back to the point that we must awaken the soul. Is the soul quite dead? Does poverty kill it? Never believe it. The Bible is full of the vices of the rich, but has little or nothing to

say of the vices of the poor. The New Testament says to the poorest of the poor, "Now is the day of salvation," and nothing can rob us of that privilege. But I say that there is no part of London that is not invaded by love and remorse and sorrow, and the soul touched by all these wakens for the moment, however soon it may relapse into its slumber. Love kindles in the heart, and shines from the eyes of youth and maiden still. There is the transfiguration. It may be brief, but it is most real and unforgettable; the transfiguration of all things, the recovered trust in the ideal. That will not die quite out even after years of alienation, sin, and brutality. There is remorse, for the conscience wakens sometimes, and thinks vainly of what might have been, wonders at its own writhings, seeks to be drugged again. Above all, there is bereavement, and Christ enters most easily through the rents and fissures of a broken heart. Yes, there is a soul, no matter how swathed, shrouded, buried, forgotten. The Lamb sees the soul, and because He sees we should see

also. There is an old legend which perhaps you remember. The Saviour and His disciples were walking along the way when they came upon a dead dog. The disciples did not conceal their disgust; the Saviour said, "How white its teeth are!" And He always finds in the most degraded that touch of hallowing beauty, that germ of spirit and life, through which His redemption may come.

III

"The Lamb shall overcome them." What ideas are associated with the Lamb? How does He awaken, how does He cast out devils, how does He raise the dead? For answer, we read of His knowledge, His love, His power, His sacrifice. In the soldiers of the Lamb these in measure must be reproduced.

We read of His knowledge. When the strong Angel called, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" when the apostle wept much because none in heaven or in earth was found worthy to open

and to read the book, the Lamb as it had been slain took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne and opened the seven seals. And they sang a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." That means that we have a message. We stand up in ourselves ignorant, perplexed, blundering, but with the words, "I have received of the Lord that which I deliver unto you." We have a message; we know; we can answer through Christ the incessant and recurrent questions of the soul. None can answer them save Christ's believers. Mark Rutherford tells us of a friend who longed to try for himself a mission in one of the slums about Drury Lane. "I sympathised with him, but I asked him what he had to say. I remember telling him that I had been into St. Paul's Cathedral, and that I pictured the Cathedral full and myself in the pulpit, and I was excited when

imagining the opportunity offered me to deliver some message to three thousand or four thousand persons in such a building. But in a minute or two I discovered that my sermon would be very nearly as follows: "Dear friends, I know no more than you. I think we had better go home." But because the Lamb has prevailed to open the book and to loose the seals thereof, we may speak without faltering, without fear, with the ring of certainty. What questions are asked, what knowledge is sought for, the heart and the conscience speak. The heart has not forgotten the little child that went twenty years ago. How is it with her now? Is there anything in all the universe that will make up for the misery of losing her? We are not ignorant concerning them which are asleep. It is pathetic beyond measure to see the fierce eagerness with which many of the most instructed minds in our day are lighting farthing candles while the sun is shining. We do not need them, we are in the broad illumination; we know that the child is safe in the arms of

Jesus. That is what Christ has told us, that is what we have to repeat. We can answer the question of conscience, not the agonising question what should people have done in the past, but the question what they must and may do now. We know what men must do to be saved. We can tell how that hour of madness which has shattered life can be plucked out from the past, how the chain of habit may be rent, how the load upon the heart may be lifted. We can tell it, and we can witness the thrilling, welcoming gladness and relief. "Do you know what Christ would say to you, my girl?" said a missionary to a poor girl dying. "He would say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'" "Would He, though, would He?" she cried, starting up. "Take me to Him, take me to Him." We can bring to the baffled, disappointed, starved, and soiled life the news of another life with new beginnings, and the immortal hope will spring up in the heart as we preach it. "How do you know that there is any heaven, anyhow?" said one slave to another. "Know it? Know

it? I know it by the hankering after it I got in here." If we know these things, we cannot choose but speak of them. They are infinitely more interesting, more absorbing than any subject of the day. Our newspapers are full of tidings concerning them that are awake—the 'live men' as they call them, alive for good or evil, fill the thoughts of men and stir their curiosity. But if any newspaper could give us authentic tidings about the humblest human creature who has left the earth, the most forgotten of all, how we should throw aside and count as nothing all the other news for that news! Of course, if there is no supernatural revelation the Church ends, and we may leave to science, to the schools, to the politicians, the regeneration of the world. But we know, and we cannot choose but speak of the things we have seen and heard.

The Lamb is another name for love. In that Lamb, love was shown stripped of the veils that hide. The love of the Lamb is the spring of our love, the love of Christ which no

sin can weary, and no lapse of time can change, all-redeeming, all-glorifying, changing even death and despair to the gates of heaven. That love may win fresh triumphs in the wilderness through our love. It does not matter whether you preach to great audiences, or teach little children, or visit poor women in the slums. It will matter very much if you do not love. You might preach with the tongue of an angel, and if you had not love, it would profit you nothing. It is love, the love that Christ kindles, and only that that will endure the frequent ugliness and loathsomeness and thanklessness and corruption and backsliding you must meet with day by day. Before you can open the sealed fountain of life in a dead heart you must first prove yourself to be a friend. I read of one sister who went and sat by the bed of a young girl suffering from small-pox. "I did it," she said, "to prove to her that I was her friend, and she believed it, and the rest came right." Yes, it is the personal relation that has the real influence. "All love," said the mystic, "is returned in

measure," and no saying is more true. Oh, but it is hard to love sometimes, when everything that was lovable seems to have passed away. But this never quite happens. There is always something that is lovable. A great writer has told with infinite pathos of how a son recovered his father. The old man had been wild and wicked, and was far gone down to hell. There was something about him so repellent, so hopeless, that the son sat beside him when he was in a drunken daze, and wondered how he could ever love him again. But as he watched, he saw the mark of some mending of the threadbare clothes, some poor, pitiful attempt at decency, and that very little thing called back the waters of the far-ebbed ocean of feeling, and his soul rushed out. Yes, a pin's prick will draw the heart's blood, and something in the lowest feels after the higher. Not always, perhaps. Mark Rutherford tells us that though the desire to decorate existence is nearly universal even amongst the most wretched, so that the worst of mortals will put a flower in the room, or an ornament

on the mantelpiece, yet in the alleys behind Drury Lane this instinct, the very salt of life, was dead. It was crushed out utterly, a symptom which seemed ominous, and even awful to the last degree. Yes, and then we must fall back on the love behind us, the love that found us.

> Come, shed abroad a Saviour's love,
> And that shall kindle ours.

Again, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power. The love of the Lamb is a mighty love. Our love is so feeble, feeble even when it is strongest, unable to avert the pain, the sin, the doom from the dearest. "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" The grief and remorse of that cry ring down the centuries even to this hour. We love, and our love cannot redeem men. Often it seems to us that power is loveless, or even at strife with love. But in the Lamb power is love, and in the end the universe shall know it. We are not left alone to fight this battle. Behind us are the reserves of heaven, and the grace which will

hold us up as Christ held up to the end of the hard day.

> Power is Love—transports, transforms
> Who aspired from worst to best,
> Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'.
> I have faith such end shall be:
> From the first, Power was—I knew.
> Life has made clear to me
> That, strive but for closer view,
> Love were as plain to see.

The Lamb is upon His Throne, and He attained that Throne through His sacrifice. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lowest parts of the earth? Before the ascent was the descent from the time of His showing to Israel till the offering up of the sacrifice which proved His devotion entire. That sacrifice can never be repeated, that perfect oblation for the sins of the whole world. Yet we are to ascend by descending, as your own John Wesley did, going down lower and lower from all that the world held precious till he died, and left behind him a living religion in England. Says a modern thinker, "No one can prove that any

form of self-sacrifice is a duty." God forbid that it ever should be proved. Self-sacrifice is the privilege of love, and its own vindication. The greater the sacrifice—this is the law—the greater the victory, and the greater the sacrifice the greater the strength and the gladness. That strange joy, sweet, and solemn, and mysterious even to those who possess it, is born of darkness and tribulation like the fragrance of night flowers. Does not the history of the Christian Church assure us that there has been a joy in dungeons and on scaffolds passing the joy of harvest? For you the sacrifice may come, not so much in great surrenders as in the small daily yieldings of the preference and the will to Christ and the souls He died for. There will be pain and there must be pain, but it will be over soon, very soon, and whilst it lasts you will enter into such fellowship with Christ as other Christians never know. Perhaps the new discovery of Christ to the Church which will mean the recovery of the power of the Church will come through such a baptism, through

the drinking of His cup, through the being baptized with His baptism.

I cannot close without a word on the passing of Hugh Price Hughes. More than any other man he stood forth to England and the world as the representative of the great mission work to which the Wesleyan Methodist Church has so happily devoted her mighty energies. I cannot add much to the many tributes of reverence and affection which have been paid to his memory. We knew that fiery, tender, eager spirit which communicated its own force to so many, which raised the standard of Christian life in London, and which is moving and eloquent among us still. Now that the exhaustion and fatigue he suffered from in his last days have passed into happy rest, we seem to know him better. He had one great characteristic which so many of our so-called leaders sadly require to-day. He had an abounding faith, an unswerving hope of the glory of God. I loved him very much for that. Sometimes we may have thought him sanguine, sometimes he was disappointed,

but he was right in his faith that whatever the forces of evil may be, the Lamb shall overcome them, and he always believed it, and said, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly." While others saw only the outer darkness, he could discern veins and fields of light. He was very sure of God, and hope maketh not ashamed. Let us be very sure of the power and love behind us of God in Christ. "Thou carest for a gourd for which thou hast not travailed, nor hast thou brought it up; a thing that came in a night, and in a night has perished. And shall I not care for this great city, in which are more than twelve times ten thousand human beings who know not their right hand from their left?"

THE FRANKNESS OF JESUS CHRIST[1]

If it were not so, I would have told you.—JOHN xiv. 2.

I HAVE wondered most of my life why Christ spoke these words at the time He did. They seem unsatisfactorily explained, whether connected with the first clause of the phrase or the last clause. Dr. Marcus Dods comments: "Had there been no such place and no possibility of preparing it, He necessarily would have told them, because the very purpose of His leaving was to prepare a place for them." Somehow this does not find me. Neither is Dr. John Ker, also a writer of genuine insight, much more satisfactory. He says: "There might be some misgivings in

[1] Sermon preached before the Surrey Congregational Union, Guildford, April 28, 1903.

their minds, and these words are thrown in to quiet them. Had you been deceiving yourselves with falsehood, I should have felt bound to undeceive you." It is along these tracks that most of the explanations run.

But should we not rather say that Christ spoke these words with a smile? "If it were not so, I would have told you. You know My way by this time. It has been My wont to check and thwart and dash your hopes. Things you desired, things you believed, things you dreamt of mightily—I have told you over and over again that they were not so. Now you are right at last. You thought that there were many mansions in the Father's house. You clung to that faith when the rest went. I knew it all the time, and I never said a word to contradict you, because it was a true and sure hope, truer and surer and sweeter than you knew. If it had not been so, I would have told you; but it is so. This time you may let your hearts go free; beyond death there are no disappointments."

If I am right, the passage expresses the

perfect and lifelong frankness of Christ. He was absolutely truthful and open. He never sought to win followers by telling them that the way was broad and easy, and the triumph early and visible. From the very beginning of His ministry He warned His disciples that the way was narrow and that the gate was strait. He urged those who thought of joining His standard to count the cost, to count it as a king counts it before he begins war, or as a builder counts it before he begins a building which may be beyond his resources. He tells them that they are not to rush ardently into the Christian life before assuring themselves how much that life means, and how fatal it is to estimate its sacrifice too cheaply. We are not to embark recklessly on a course in which, once begun, we must persevere at any cost. We are not to begin an enterprise of which we are likely to grow weary. Not mere impulse, but impulse guided by reason is to move us. Nor are we to hide any peril of the way from those who seek to join us.

I

Let me recall a few of Christ's words, words which reveal that frankness of truth wherein we put our trust. At the very budding and beginning of His career He said: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." He warned one who would follow Him of the hazards he was running. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." He told the children of the bride-chamber that the days of mourning would come when the bridegroom was taken away from them. He said that He came to send a sword through the closest and dearest earthly ties. His disciples saw Him pass that sword through His own relationships. "Who is My mother or My brethren? Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." He declared that His disciples would be hated of all men for His name's

sake. He rejected, to the marvel of His disciples, those who seemed to promise best, those who might have brought to the little company worldly influence and wealth. When He sent the rich young ruler away, the disciples asked, and no wonder, "Who then can be saved?" He told them, when the time came that He would soon perish in Jerusalem. He was to suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed. They thought that His kingdom was to come in Jewry, come in a crash of splendid triumph; but it was not so. They dreamed that when that kingdom came they would sit near Him on His Throne; but He warned them that the exaltation could not be, unless they drank of His cup and were baptized with His baptism of fire. His destiny was the Cross, and they also had to be cross-bearers in His train. One by one down went tower and temple, all the earthly city of their thoughts and hopes. But the heavenly hope which was in their minds also, that survived. The new Jerusalem was no dream. If it had been,

He would have told them, as He had told them in unwelcome and darkening words many a time, that their hopes were vain, that their realisation could never be. Now at least and at last they were right. "In My Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you."

II

Christ thus throws forward their hopes on Heaven. He warns them that on earth for the few years they lingered their lot was to be hard and bitter enough. And yet, speaking always with the rigidity and the exactness as well as the frankness of truth, He tells them that even here and in this world there are to be great alleviations, rich compensations. When Peter said, "Lo, we have left all and have followed Thee," Jesus answered and said: "Verily, I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold

now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life." This is the compression of Christ's teaching on reward, and it is well that we should understand it. The persecutions and the eternal life in the world to come may seem to create no difficulty; but did Christ really mean that His followers who for His sake and the Gospel's had parted with love and land would receive in this time a hundred times more love, a hundred times more land? That was what He meant. That was what He promised to those who gave Him their hearts without reserve. A hundred times more love—how could that be? When the ties of blood are severed, when brothers and sisters and father and mother and wife and children are taken away, must not the heart die of starvation? No; for the passing of the earthly love is the influx of the heavenly love, and—

> The love of Jesus, what it is
> None but His loved ones know.

None of the saints, it has been said, has found starvation instead of love, and the saying is true and faithful. However rich we may once have been in earthly love, and however poor we may be to-day, we may be a hundred times richer if only the heart is open for the entrance of the Infinite and Living Love. No alienation, no estrangement, no bereavement, can leave us poor, if we but know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. No doubt Christ meant also that we should find love and answer for the heart's needs in the communion of saints; but even if we did not, even if we were left quite alone so far as human friendships went, we may be very rich. There are those, and they are many, who have to go through life with very little earthly love, and that little grows less or disappears in the passing of the years; but what of that? As He saith in Osee: "I will call her beloved which was not beloved."

And a hundred times more land? How can that be? What is it to possess land or to possess anything material? We can only

possess what we can appropriate. A possession is good only as it ministers to our good. A millionaire buys a huge library, and hires a librarian at a small salary. To the millionaire the books are pieces of furniture. The librarian has a secret thirst for knowledge, and every book is in its measure a helper and friend. He takes down Milton, and feels the morning freshness and the summer heat of "Comus." He puts Shakespeare to the question. The great poets and prophets and consolers of the race bring him their message. Who possesses the library? Does not the librarian possess it a thousand times more than the millionaire? So when we are related to God as dear children we possess everything. This beautiful countryside is not mine, but I possess it. It belongs to me, for I can appropriate its beauty of colour and contour. I go through it with a rejoicing heart, and I care not who holds the title-deeds. "I feel so very happy," said James Smetham, "among our English hedgerows, and I find such inexhaustible and trans-

cendent delight in the English flowers and birds and trees and hills and brooks. My difficulty is to appreciate our little back garden —our copper beech, our weeping ash, our little nailed-up rose-trees and twisting yellow creepers, whose names I have been told a hundred times and shall never get off by heart." So we may have a hundred times more love and a hundred times more land, despite all possible impoverishment. Yet an apparent impoverishment here must sometimes be with persecution. There must be something to test our union to God so that we may know that the relationship is ours, and give the world assurance of that relationship. What convinces the world in the long-run that we speak true is "an incorrigible and *losing* honesty."

One point has to be specially emphasised. The reward of fidelity is here defined by Christ as immediate and not deferred. The persecution and the possession go together. Christ's heart is broken up in these great chapters, and we see that it is full to the core

of rest, that great waves of peace roll out from it. He was within an hour of Gethsemane and a day of Calvary, and yet He had peace for Himself and peace to give and leave to all who trusted Him. He tells His friends that they would find the time between His home-going and their home-going a time of great peace. Yet it was to be a time of incredible and wearing strain. Yes; but the peace was to triumph over the trouble, and the trouble could never mar the peace. Rather the trouble deepened it, confirmed it. It brought them into the fellowship of His sufferings. It is thus that they who sometimes were far off were made nigh. We know in the dearest relations of human life how one little grave will bring the household close together, in an almost impossible nearness. So to know Christ is to know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings. And the years go bravely for those who do, and they count the cost well worth paying. We are apt to think of a triumph on earth after a long fight, seeing our cause prevail, and laying down

our weapons amid congratulation and honour. Sometimes there are visible crowns laid on heads that have grown grey in the service of great causes. Much more often crowns do not come. There is but little glory in ordinary triumphs. There is much ignominy in public honour. There is much apathy in the world's fidelity and much fickleness in its love, and on these we are never to set our hearts. The persecutions and the peace go together. Without the one we shall never know the full depth of the other.

But here, as elsewhere, Christ throws the stress on the other life. The best paraphrase of this verse is Luther's, "If the devil with his tyrants hunt you out of the world, you shall still have room enough." I am persuaded that Tennyson and Lightfoot were right when they said that the doctrine of the New Testament is the doctrine of the other life. Many are the blessings that spring up, flower-like, in the track of faith. Here, by fidelity and by love, we may enjoy God as well as glorify Him; but the hope of the New Testa-

ment is beyond the years of time. As Bunyan put it, "Children, the milk and honey are beyond this wilderness."

III

We see, then, that what Christ cared for supremely was not quantity, but quality. He did not seek to gather a multitude who followed Him for the loaves and fishes, mercenaries who would flinch at the critical hour. He knew that these would in the long-run weaken His Church, chill its life and ardour and courage, put it to shame before the world. He left very few believers behind Him, but they were the small transfigured band whom the world could not tame. He was always testing, sifting, searching His disciples, always seeking for those who would be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. We may see for ourselves that the revivals of religious life come always from a few. The history of the Church is full of the lesson. A few men who have counted the cost, who have

made up their minds to peril all, who have relinquished worldly ambition, band themselves together, and what is the result? You see it, for example, in the Oxford Movement, a movement which has brought much evil in its train, but which, nevertheless, had a genuine force of conviction behind it. Its leaders might have looked forward to the highest places in a worldly Church, but, almost without exception, they lived and died poor. They made sacrifices for their faith, and they were so richly compensated in the inward life that they never uttered a word of complaint. Even if but one man is faithful to a cause, that cause is not lost. However dark the skies may be, there is a rift in the darkness, and that rift will widen and conquer. Men of one mind and one purpose, single-hearted and faithful, and visibly without care or fear, will in due time bring others round them. A glowing centre of fire will subdue the black mass to itself.

IV

We learn from these words to trust Christ more than ever, to trust His silences as well as His promises. He did not say very much about Heaven in those years of His earthly travail. Even at the last He did not give His disciples a description or an inventory of the New Country. He asked them to trust Him, and did a little more than that. What they believed was that in the Father's house there were many mansions. He confirmed that faith, but He went on to add the gracious words, "I go to prepare a place for you." It was as if He said, "In My Father's house are many mansions, still I go to prepare a place for you." As if the mansions were not good enough, but needed the finishing touch of His love. We know what that means. When a guest is coming to the house, the hostess prepares. The rooms are there, the furniture is there, but the thoughtful, tender-hearted woman has something to do beyond making them ready. She prepares for the guest.

This, she says to herself, is his favourite flower, his favourite book, and that little touch of kindness makes the welcome perfect. It may not be much that she is able to do, but the little means that she would fain do all. So Christ prepares for Peter, prepares for John, prepares for Thomas. He knows what they like, and He does not forget. So He prepares for His people through the generations till the end arrives. They will find that He has made ready the flower, the book.

So, then, let us cherish our dreams. They will all come true in Him. It is in His love that we are to find our happiness, not in anything apart from His love. What He gives is precious as the gift of love, and we may trust Him, trust Him even when He does not speak. Do not ask texts for everything. There are those who cannot believe the Father of the spirits of all flesh unless He is bound down by black and white. But let us have faith in the heart of things. Trust Christ in His promises, trust Him in His

silences. Golden is the speech of Christ: golden also is His silence.

Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach. Let us esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Let us give all for love, and count the world well lost. Let us count the cost and pay it, pay it in obedience to an impulse which in its turn is obedient to reason, to the exalted, the transfigured, the unworldly reason. In the great words of Lessing, "He who does not lose his reason in certain things has none to lose."

THE FATHER AND THE THREE SONS[1]

When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. . . . Now his elder son was in the field.—LUKE xv. 20, 25.

THE Romance of Grace, as this story of the prodigal has been called, is in a manner incomplete—suggestively, wistfully, pathetically incomplete. Yet we find God's completeness in it when we remember that it was spoken by the Eternal Son. The Redeemer told the story, and He told it foreknowing all that was so soon to be, the tempest in the grey garden, the mockery in the house of Annas, the dereliction on the Cross. But He did not speak of Himself. On His own share He is so utterly silent that the silence becomes

[1] Dedication sermon of Woodford Union Church (Rev. Joseph Hocking's). Preached on Thursday, April 28, 1904.

eloquent. Because He says nothing of His share in the home-bringing, had He no share? Just because He says nothing, all the space between the lines is heavy with excess of meaning. He Who speaks to us was the Minister of God's grace, the Redeemer of guilty sinners, and when that is kept in view each detail falls into its place.

I

Withdrawing the light from Himself, our Lord concentrates it on three, the prodigal son, the father, and the elder brother. He teaches us what we have been so ready to forget, that the coming home of the soul is not merely a coming to oneself, a coming to the father, but also a coming to the elder brother. That was how Christ peopled the house which the son had left—with a father and an elder son. He might have filled it otherwise, for sometimes the prodigal comes back to a mother and brothers and sisters, but for His purpose He needed but the two. Christians are very

slow to learn that conversion in the New Testament sense is not the return of the lonely soul to the only God. It is the renewal of human ties that have been broken as well as of Divine. The return to God is a return to the Church. There have been mystics who have found God and lived on Him without entering into relation with their brethren in Christ. But just as the perfection of human life cannot be achieved apart from fellowship, so the soul separated from its kindred takes distorted forms. The New Testament contemplates every Christian as a member of the Church of which Jesus is the Head, growing up in harmony and fulness to the measure of the stature of Christ. Christian growth becomes fair and strong not in a cloistered and remote piety, but in the communion of the household of God. So whenever evangelistic work has been fruitful and permanent in its results, it has conducted the soul home to the Church as well as home to God. The work of George Whitefield was in its day as successful and outstanding as that of Wesley, but there

is no comparison now, for whereas Whitefield allowed his work to become scattered by ignoring methods of organisation, Wesley was constructive, and formed his converts into classes and churches. This, then, is the first lesson, that conversion is a return to the brethren as well as a return to the Father.

II

Nothing could add to the picture of the father and his grace given by Jesus. A modern writer has said that the feature of the parable is the magnificent repentance of the prodigal. It was a magnificent repentance, a repentance that made no excuses, that humbled itself utterly. But more magnificent by far was the forgiveness of the father. Day after day he was watching when there seemed no hope of the wanderer appearing, day by day looking out with a hungry, expectant heart, running a great way to meet the sinner whenever he turned to the abandoned home, asking no question, speaking no word of

rebuke, refusing to hear the confession out, calling for the robe, and the ring, and the feast. How Jesus delighted in God the Father as He told this story! What faith He had in the abysses of fatherly tenderness. This was the love which had been the life of Christ, the love of the Son for the Father, of the Father for the Son. To Him there was no love like a Father's love. There was no wonder of grace too wonderful for the Father's heart.

Have you observed that when Christ spoke His first sermon He laid hold of the fatherliness in our poor fallen human nature as that which in a manner still remained, as that which was the deepest image of God still visible in men, so that the lost could say as one poor heart did, "I am God's coin." How did our nature appear to the pure eyes that searched it out in silence for thirty years? When He speaks we shall know. He did speak, and He said, "What man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Yes, human nature was evil, there was no doubt of that. But it was not wholly evil. There was not a man among all who were listening to Him who would not be kind to his child. On the part of the father, then, there is no obstacle. He is willing to be gracious, he is waiting to be gracious, he is on the watch-tower, he runs a great way to meet the penitent. Day by day, year by year, he keeps looking, and when every one else has given up hope, the father still refuses to despair and to say, "He will not return to me."

III

So much for the attitude of the father. What is the attitude of the Church to the self-made exile? What is the attitude of the elder brethren? This parable contains a representation of that attitude by the Eldest Brother, and we shall see the more we dwell

on it how true and pitiful the picture is. In the first place, there is a good side to the Church, for we read "his elder son was in the field." That was a good place to be in, incomparably better than the far country. We are told how the elder brother worked there. "Lo, these many years do I serve thee," and it is a great thing to serve for many years in the heat by day and in the frost by night. "Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment," and that also is a great thing to say, no black, foul transgression staining and soaking the years, a record of obedience never broken by a refusal. Yes, it meant much, and the father knew it, for he said, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Let us not be unjust to the elder brother, for the Eldest Brother is most just. The farm had to be kept up and worked, and he did his part well. He had never been away perhaps, had not even sought amusements or holidays. Prosaic and monotonous all must have been at times, as all good work is, but he had stuck to it, and therein was

most worthy of praise. Now what is true of him is true of the Church of Christ. The Church of Christ is being constantly reproached in these days, reproached by those outside, reproached by her own, till loyal workers grow disheartened, and wonder sometimes whether there is any better means of doing God's work in the world than by being faithful and diligent in His Church. There is no better way. In spite of all failures, how much of loyalty, fidelity, self-denial, endurance, and heroic constancy mark the life of the wonderful Church of Christ! The details of a church report may be prosaic enough on the surface, but to those who understand what they all mean, they are full of a heavenly poetry. The collection of the money, the keeping up of the societies, the Sunday school teaching, the Bible class, the help in the choir, the visiting, the prayer meetings, the unbroken, hopeful, wistful attendance at Divine service—how good they all are! How often it has refreshed my soul to hear burdened men in the city talking about the work of the chapels they

love and live for! We make far too little of all that. We do not recognise the workers as we should, nor do we acknowledge the value of their work. I am sure the Lord thinks very differently from many of the clever critics. Not till the voice of the Master is heard saying, "Come up higher," will it be known what we owe to our faithful hard-working deacons, to all who serve Christ among us. When I think of all that is involved in the building of a church like this, and in the building of many churches where circumstances are more difficult, I thank God and take courage. These are offerings to God of a sweet-smelling savour. What the critics do for the regeneration of the world has never been clear to me. What is clear is that it is the work of the Church in the field, the unnoticed, regular, obscure work, that has kept the soul alive in England.

IV

But are we satisfied with the Church? Was the Eldest Brother satisfied? He did

not criticise, but he set down in detail the behaviour of the elder brother with a touch of tender regret, and it will be well for us to study his picture.

The elder son had given up hope of the younger. He had cast him out. He said, "Thy son"; he did not say, "My brother." The son was nothing to him now. It was well that he said, "Thy son." It is well for the Church to remember of the prodigal that it is our brother who is estranged, and that our brother is God's son. Next, he was uncharitable, for he said, "who hath devoured thy living with harlots." He had no right to say that. Was it true? It may have been, but he did not know it, and even if he knew it, he should not have said it. The Eldest Brother did not say so. Let us not make things worse than they are. Nowadays we hear Churchmen saying the working man will not come to church because he is earthly, because he is a drunkard, because he is sensual, because he does not care to find God. Is this true? That is not the question. This is the

voice of the elder brother, and the Eldest Brother hears it. It may be true. Yes, but is it kind, is it wise?

The Eldest Brother is more merciful. Have you noticed the immense charity of God in the Bible? The grand arraignments of human nature come more from penitents and from saints than from God. We are glad oftentimes that God should know the very worst of us, glad that He should speak of our sins as crimson and scarlet.

> Thanks for the word of old time said,
> Thanks for that glimmer of scarlet dye;
> All we sin-burdened bow the head,
> Each owning the chief of sinners I.

But observe how the Divine courtesy puts it. "Though your sins be as scarlet . . . though they be red like crimson," I do not say they are. Does some one say, "I could prove all I have said about the prodigal"? Well, and what if you could?

So then we look again at the words, "the elder son was in the field," and somehow they are less encouraging. Observe that the years

were long. "These many years have I served thee." The service of love turns years into days, and God has no use for a man with a grievance. "Neither transgressed I, but I never ran before and anticipated your word, I never saw the look in your eye. It was a weariful sense of duty that ruled me. Yes, life was cheerless, worried, and blighted. I was in the field, never on the outlook, never anticipating, never expecting, hardly even wishing. I might have been in the field and watched there for the shadow of the returning child." In the field—now the Eldest Brother lays his finger so gently on his sore. "You were very tired, were you not? in the isolated farm, wishing almost that the house might burn down, so that anyhow the dull procession of events might be broken. Did you not feel the townward drift from the monotony of the country? Was not life a grinding at the mill, divorced from freedom, movement, personal initiative, eager zest, and caught in the trammels of routine?" Yes, it was so. We know how it is with us in the Church, how

organisation tends to coldness, and regularity to rigour, and respectability to pharisaism, how the hope and enthusiasm and passion die out of the soul, and we are content to hold our own, and to let our pews, and would positively be disturbed if a prodigal came in to sit with us.

V

What is the Church to do?

(1) Keep the children at home. Who drove the prodigal out? Perhaps it was his elder brother. Anyhow, we must never let the children out. Christ never meant we should. Born into the Church of Christ, they should never leave it. They should live in it, love it, serve it, die in it. We have to say much about religious education in these days, but *the* religious education is the education of the home by the parents. Parents, if you are faithful to your trust for the first eight years, the children should be safe. Saturate them with the thought, the love, the name of Jesus, fill their hearts with texts and psalms and

prayers, and, please God, they will stay. Hear the solemn and tender command of Christ, more imperative as it comes to a parent than as it came to an apostle, "Feed My lambs." Many a one has resisted all temptation, the long trial of the reason, the briefer and fiercer temptation of the passions, the test of success and failure, and has conquered. The secret of it all is the little prayer taught by the mother who died early, and took the pledge from her little son that he would never miss it morning or night. That pledge has been kept, and so the life has not strayed from the bosom of the Church.

(2) Then, are we sure we wish them to come back after they have long gone? They have been in the far country for years now, and will never be what they were. Do we want them to come again and trouble us in their rags, their misery, their sores, their shame? Are our eyes on the long, dusty road down which they may be coming even now? When the Church longs for the prodigal as the Father longs, then will come the great

day of reconciliation and weeping. I know that from the pulpit of this church there will be a welcome. I know that my friend, your minister, will be ready to meet those who have wandered in any track that leads from God, that he will be patient with the doubter, that he will plead with the careless, that he will believe in the profligate who has lost faith in himself. But will his spirit be the spirit of this church, or will you be satisfied with the ninety-and-nine who are safe, with the well-filled pews, and suffer no heartache for those who are gone away?

(3) You will observe that the Eldest Brother leaves the end doubtful. Did the elder brother go in and sit down with the father and the prodigal and the servants? Will the Church of Christ cease to play the part of the elder brother, and share the father's heart? We have been letting them slip; all the time they have been slipping from our homes, from our Sunday schools, from our churches. They are slipping away still every hour of every day. If we are to bring them back we must do

much more than welcome them. Some of us at least must go out with the Eldest Brother to seek and to save that which is lost. Is it possible that it may be right for a redeemed soul to love the estranged even more than it loves Christ? What said the Divine apostle? "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." We are not to give an intellectual analysis of that most passionate of all human cries. We can never repair the past except by sacrifice, but when we are willing Christ will show us how great things we must suffer for His name's sake. For He goes out to the far country and pleads—

My blood so red
For thee was shed.
Come home again, come home again,
My own sweetheart, come home again.
You've gone astray,
Out of your way;
Come home again, come home again.

We can never offer the atoning sacrifice, but we may fill up that which is behind of the

afflictions of Christ. When we do that, when our wandering brethren see the print of the nails upon us, they will return. "The Church was born crucified," said Lacordaire. Have her wounds been healed and their record obliterated? If so, the wounds must be inflicted anew. The world will come back to the Church when it sees the Church crucified with Christ. And so

> Measure thy life by loss instead of gain,
> Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth.

"THE SOUND OF A TRUMPET AND THE VOICE OF WORDS"[1]

The sound of a trumpet and the voice of words.—HEBREWS xii. 19.

ON February 23, 1791, John Wesley preached his last sermon at Leatherhead in the dining-room of a magistrate from the text, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." Thus that wonderful voice fell silent—that voice which they who heard entreated that the word should be spoken to them for evermore. He was then eighty-eight, and the long course of his earthly life, with its afflictions, its homelessness, its fatigue, and its constant triumph in Christ, was nearing the end. The next day

[1] Sermon preached at the opening of the Wesley Memorial at Leatherhead, February 23, 1905.

he wrote his last letter, denouncing "the execrable villainy" of slavery. He died on March 2. For many years he had lived in the second rest—that rest where Christ's yoke is easy and His burden light. Spiritual throes and pangs, earthly cares and fears, were far in the past, and it was with him as with his friend Fletcher of Madeley, of whom he testified that he died in an unspeakable calmness and serenity of spirit, "a tranquillity in the Blood of Christ which keeps the souls of believers in their latest hour, even as a garrison keeps a city." So he went home from the life which he himself had described as "a few days in a strange land."

I have chosen as a motto rather than a text a phrase from the passage in Hebrews where the terrors of Sinai are contrasted with the peace of Sion. At Sinai there was the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words,—the tempest, the terror, the fire, and the quaking. But Sion is the home of all stable and tranquil things. We come to it now by faith, but only, as it were, in moonlight and in silence. No

sound is heard but the voice of the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. We shall come, if it please God, one day in the sunlight and the song.

The points I wish to make clear to-day are very simple. For true preaching and true revival we need two things—the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words. The sound of a trumpet is in vain, if the voice of words does not follow it. The end is that false enthusiasm dying in grey ashes which no one denounced more fervently than John Wesley. There must be instruction after evangelisation, or all is in vain. It has been nobly said that "life is spent in learning the meaning of great words, so that some idle proverb known for years and accepted perhaps as a truism comes home on a day like a blow." But we never know the meaning of great words till the sound of a trumpet rouses the soul from slumber. The work of John Wesley is most fitly described in this twofold aspect as the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words.

I

He set the trumpet to his mouth and sounded it at a time when religion in England seemed dying or dead. Even in secular life there was a leisurely procession, with many sober pauses of which we know little now. In the Church there was a much denser stupor, a spiritual slumber so profound that godly men openly despaired, and to others it seemed as if Christianity had waxed old, and was ready to vanish away. The voice of words continued, but they seemed to be spoken to no purpose. One of the greatest Christian thinkers of England, Bishop Butler, sat oppressed in his castle with hardly a hope surviving. He did not know that the day of the Lord had come, and that the prayers of the hearts that broke for the Lord's appearing had been answered.

For when John Wesley began his unparalleled apostolate, he sounded a trumpet in Sion. His words to the people were such short, sharp signal-calls as St. Augustine heard in the garden when the child said,

"Take, read." He stood on his father's tomb and cried aloud, "By grace are ye saved through faith." He preached on the question, "Why will ye die, O House of Israel?" till the people trembled and were still. He enlarged on the deep words, "Repent, and believe the Gospel." From the text, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," he declared the great salvation. He spoke directly to the consciousness. The important point with him was consciousness, everywhere consciousness. The core of his creed was personal perception and appropriation of the work of Christ. Of Butler, for all his greatness, it has been truly said by his deepest student that the "religious consciousness does not receive from him the slightest consideration, whereas it is with its nature and functions that the scientific theology of the present time is almost entirely occupied." When Butler died, Wesley had completed fourteen years of his work, and within earshot of the Bishop's castle the Methodist colliers were singing their ecstatic hymns. The sleep

had been shattered. The spiritual live-shell had burst among the people, killing conventionality and wounding self-satisfaction with a deadly wound. The people had awakened at the sound of the trumpet, and lo! it was morning. The sun was up and the dew was on the grass. Wesley and Whitefield and the rest were "out of breath pursuing souls."

> The love of Christ doth me constrain
> To seek the wandering souls of men;
> With cries, entreaties, tears to save,
> To snatch them from the gaping grave.

The Gospel won its triumph everywhere, as Wesley said—among the miners in Cornwall, the colliers in Kingswood, the drunkards of Moorfields, and the harlots of Drury Lane. They awoke and heard the word, "In the Divine purpose there are lines of love for *thee*." Butler had preached his great sermons at Stanhope, but when John Wesley visited the place near the end of his life, he describes it as "famed for nothing but a very uncommon degree of wickedness."

The sound of a trumpet. Our newer

psychology, however little we may agree with its conclusions, has at least brought out the richness of what is called our subliminal consciousness. We know now that the mind of man is peopled, like a silent city, with a sleeping company of memories, associations, impressions, loves, hates, fears, relentings that may be wakened into fierce activity by some trumpet blast. Indeed, this subliminal consciousness may be so much more thronged than the working consciousness, that when it is called forth it may submerge the personality, and elect for itself a new king to reign over it. The crowd of insurgent spirits may overthrow the old monarchy. In the people to whom Wesley spoke there were God knows what memories, though the lamp of prophecy had been burning very low. There were in the darkened souls texts, prayers, psalms, hymns, words of love and yearning spoken by lips long mute. And these were heard again at the trumpet blast. The sound of the trumpet may come in some great experience, and will come again and again, even when the soul has

been wakened from its sleep. Then, too, the voice of words is understood. Said a friend to me, "I used to think the inscriptions on gravestones intensely commonplace. Since I buried my child and put a gravestone over her, there is not an inscription which has not been full of meaning to me." John Wesley's was a soul that never seemed to slumber, and yet we read that after his brother died, when he was a very old man, he gave out at Bolton the hymn, "Come, O Thou Traveller unknown." When he tried to read the lines—

> My company before is gone,
> And I am left alone with thee,

he broke down under uncontrollable emotion, burst into a flood of tears, sat down in the pulpit, and hid his face in his hands, while all the people wept. Shortly after he visited his friend, the widow of Fletcher, and she wrote that his soul was "far more sunk into God, and such an unction attends his words that each sermon was indeed spirit and life."

II

The voice of words. Wesley was a great teacher as well as a great evangelist, and no man did more for the training and schooling of his converts. No man attached greater importance to the voice of words, to constant and Scriptural instruction. We put in the fore-front the great saving truths which he exalted with the whole Church of Christ. "If we could once bring all our preachers, itinerant and local, uniformly and steadfastly to insist on these two points—Christ dying for us, and Christ reigning in us, we should shake the trembling gates of hell." But his tranquillity to the very end was a tranquillity in the Blood of Christ. If he had been asked to define the special truth committed to the care of Methodists, he would undoubtedly have referred to his doctrine of Christian perfection. But he would never have rested his hope of salvation on any attainment or achievement of his own. His angelical friend—Fletcher—for his last months scarce

ever lay down or rose up without these words in his mouth—

> I nothing have, I nothing am,
> My treasure's in the bleeding Lamb,
> Both now and evermore.

He said, "I trust I shall never leave the shadow of Christ's Cross, the clefts of the rock pierced and smitten for us." When John Wesley was dying, he said, "When at Bristol my words were, 'I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me.'" A friend beside him asked, "Is that your language now?" "Yes," said he, "Christ is all, He is all." He seldom spoke, but once in a wakeful interval was heard saying in a low, distinct voice, "There is no way into the holiest but by the Blood of Jesus." Then, referring to the text, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich," he remarked with solemn emphasis, "That is the foundation, the only foundation; there is no other." When he died, his friends remembered that his mother

had said, "Children, as soon as I am dead sing a song of praise." It was fit that, standing about his body, they should sing—

> Waiting to receive thy spirit,
> Lo, the Saviour stands above;
> Shows the purchase of His merit,
> Reaches out the crown of Love.

It is certain also that Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection is not a theological dogma, but intensely ethical and practical. He had satisfied himself that the great majority of Christians were not living the life of the New Testament. He believed that the whole fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace—might be planted in the inmost soul and take deep root in the heart. But he believed that for the attainment of such perfection it was necessary to be obedient in all things to the law of Christ, and he did not shrink from the consequences.

I shall touch only on one point—his teaching on money. He did not hesitate to expound the Sermon on the Mount, and to obey it as he understood it. He knew that the Sermon on the Mount was law, not Gospel,

though Gospel-law, and suggesting everywhere the calls and succours of the Gospel that was coming. The Sermon on the Mount drove men to the Gospel, and once they had received the Gospel they turned back to the Sermon on the Mount again, so that in a manner it is the end as well as the beginning of the Christian life. But Wesley laid a special stress on its teaching about money. To the very end of his life he was burdened with the fear that money was corrupting rich Methodists. When he was eighty-seven he declared that one great reason of the comparative failure of Christianity was the neglect of the solemn words, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." He even regretted that in the beginning he was not as firm about dress as the Quakers or the Moravian brethren. Diligence and frugality must produce riches, and the only way of escape was to bestow them. In his own exposition of the Sermon on the Mount he is very explicit. "How is it possible for a rich man to grow richer without denying the Lord that bought

him? Yet how can any man who has already the necessaries of life gain or aim at more and be guiltless? 'Lay not up,' saith our Lord, 'treasures upon earth.' If, in spite of this, you do and will lay up money or things which moth or rust may corrupt, or thieves break through and steal; if you will add house to house or field to field—why do you call yourself a Christian? You don't obey Jesus Christ. Why do you name yourself by His name? 'Why call ye Me Lord, Lord,' saith He Himself, 'and do not the things that I say?'" For himself, Wesley died as he had lived, without a purse. He might have been a rich man, but he spent nothing on himself if he could possibly help it. For upwards of seventy-six years he kept his accounts exactly, and then wrote, "I will not attempt it any longer, being satisfied with the continual conviction that I save all I can, and give all I can. That is all I seek."

So with the voice of words, full and rich, alike in theology and ethics, Wesley taught his people. Are we beyond him or is he

beyond us? Has the Christian Church faced the Sermon on the Mount? Has the Christian Church, in particular, thought of money as Christ and the Apostles thought of it, as the subtlest and most dangerous of all temptations? Has the Church been kept back from the joy and peace of the New Testament by failure in the new obedience? These are questions which will become more and more urgent in the years before us.

The trumpet of revival, Wesley taught, must be the trump of God. All our fresh springs are in the Divine Spirit. Where the first life was found we must find the new supplies. The flaming, glowing heart that utters itself in words that let in the light and the life and love of God to the soul must be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and the Spirit is given in answer to prayer. It is in prayer, when we reach the fulness and vehemence and the deepest agony of desire, that the gift of the Spirit is given, and the Messiah comes. When Mrs. Hill met Fletcher he

asked her who the Methodists were. "The Methodists," said she, "are a people who do nothing but pray. They are praying all day and all night." "Are they?" said he; "then with the help of God I will find them out if they be above ground."

What hath God wrought! You are doing honour to John Wesley this day, but much more to his Saviour. You are showing that these things he taught you are not dreams, that you know Whom you have believed and what you have taken in hand, and that your purpose is that the work which John Wesley began more than a hundred years ago shall grow and flourish. There will be heard in this place for generations to come the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words. Let me sound the trumpet now, and say to the most hopeless and the most guilty soul before me that there is salvation—full, free, present salvation—through the Blood of Jesus. You have heard till you are weary that even God cannot alter the past. Never believe it. As a great sinner has said, in words just printed,

Christ showed that the commonest sinner could do it, that it was the one thing he could do. Repent and believe, and your sins are blotted out, and you are loosed from them all for ever in His own Blood. And here the voice of pleading and instruction will be heard among the children, and their life in Christ will open like a tender dawn. They will not need to know the experience which great transgressors must pass through. But they will learn to love the Saviour, and that is enough. "A flower, when offered in the bud, is no vain sacrifice."

THE HOMING OF THE PEOPLE[1]

And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.—JOHN vii. 53, and viii. 1.

"THE Church of God is coming up, not down, to her work among the people." This is as it should be; specially true of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which may have been for a season the fashion of the rich, but which is for all time the heritage of the poor. Taking up her task, the Church is confronted at once by the intolerable conditions in which multitudes of the people have to lead their life. The social problem has come to the front, and will remain there till some solution is attained. I wish to make two points this morning—first, that the Church ought to

[1] Sermon preached at the anniversary of the West London Mission, Queen's Hall, Friday, May 12, 1905.

speak, not of the housing, but of the homing of the people; next, that the Church is not so much the home of the people as the home-maker of the people.

When we turn to our Lord's own life, we learn the Church's duty. Our text shows us the homeless Christ. His disciples had their houses to go to, houses, perhaps, of mud and clay, but homes in spite of that. But with that infinite separateness, as it has been called, which ever and anon fell upon all His relations, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At the beginning of His ministry they marked that separateness. At the marriage in Cana they said, "Every man . . . but Thou." So it was now. Very likely no hospitality was offered to Him. Perhaps those who would fain have received Him had no room. In any case, He had nowhere to lay His head. Verily, He knew the heart of a stranger. He had come from Heaven to earth, from the Throne of Glory to the hall of unrighteous judgment. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. He began His

earthly career in a manger, and ended it on the hard bed of the Cross.

But Christ had an earthly home once, and not very long before. He had His home in Joseph's cottage, and as He was supposed to be the Son of Joseph, no doubt He was used to call that home "My father's house." It was very humble, but all we can read or imagine shows that it must have been very happy. The Holy Child cast the mantle of His own radiance over all His surroundings. He grew in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man. When the time came, He took His share in the bearing of the burden, and at last perhaps He bore it altogether. It seems as if when Joseph died He became the Head of the house, and His own hands ministered to His necessities, and the necessities of those who were with Him. The hands that were in after days to touch the little children in their innocence and the harlots in their filth, that were to carry the reed of scorn, that were to be nailed on the tree, were hands worn and soiled by labour.

But I say that the home was happy. We have a most revealing glimpse in the words of Mary when He had just left her. She said at the marriage, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." He had been subject to them, but they had been subject to Him, though unconsciously; they were all at the touch of His fingers. Mary's faith was to be shaken in the coming tempests, but it held fast at Nazareth. The home was lowly, but it was blessed; and those who pity its poverty do not understand. One who had compassion on a poor scholar in his shabby room at Kentish Town received the answer, "You would not pity my present condition so much if you had seen the cottage in which I was born, and where my father and mother loved each other, and died happier than on their wedding-day."

Then for a time He had a home in the Church. As a child He sought the Temple, and worshipped in the Synagogue. So dearly did He love the Temple, that it seemed to Him as a boy as if He could dwell in His

Father's house at Jerusalem all the days of His life in wonder and in worship. We know how He was driven out. We remember the wrath of the Lamb in His Father's house. The house that was to be a house of prayer for all nations had been turned into a den of thieves.

So at last His thoughts turned to the Father's house above, the house that was His home before all worlds, the house that He was to prepare as the home of His redeemed people. But He did not say when He was nearing His end that He Himself was going to the Father's house. He was going to His Father—"I go to My Father," to the deepest bosom of the Eternal Love. Indeed, this has been His home through all the days of His flesh. He had never been banished therefrom in the spirit, though in the flesh He was bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows. In His early interview with Nicodemus, when it was night, and the wind sighed through the narrow streets of old Jerusalem, He forgot His surround-

ings, and said, "The Son of man Who *is* in heaven." Close on the Cross He said, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me where I am," not "where I shall be," but "where I am." He said this when the lanterns and torches were kindled, when He was going down to the full bitterness of His passion. "May be with Me, that they may behold My glory." The glory of the Easter morning? Yes. The glory of the third heaven? Yes. The glory of the judgment day? Yes. But the prophet said, "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." And the evangelist comments, These things said Esaias when he beheld—not His humiliation, but His glory: the humiliation was the glory.

So in turn our Saviour homes His people. He is their home-maker in the house, in the Church, in heaven.

I

First comes the home where father, mother, children dwell together. Every thoughtful observer has perceived that in our times many things threaten the home, and that the home must be defended at all hazards by the Christian Church. The family is to Jesus the indispensable unit. Its foundation is laid in His pure, severe, and final law of marriage. The home is not to be at the mercy of uncontrollable temper, or of unbridled and shifting desires. It is to be the refreshment of all who live in it, their blessedness, their peace, their reward, and their discipline—their discipline in forbearance and in self-respect.

Now, there cannot be a home without a house, and multitudes of our people have to live in houses which cannot be turned into homes, dens where self-respect and decency and humanity are continually outraged. It is well that the Church has been called on to

confront the problem. No doubt the Church has taken on a look of unreality and misdirected energy. There has been for years little observable contact between ecclesiastical and theological discussions and the human needs of modern life. It has been said too truly that to the vast majority of those who were most concerned in the social question, the Christ of the Churches has become an object of complete indifference, if not of positive scorn. Christ is honoured as a human, unmysterious leader of the poor, utterly removed from the tradition and the creeds of Christian worship. The Church has to retrieve the lost ground, and that in many ways. Already a beginning has been made, already we perceive that we have to take part in legislation and administration. Already it is perceived that Christian men are doing Christian work when they devote themselves in Councils and in Parliament to the cause of social reform. We have also to break up the huge aggregations of poverty in our great cities that are unrelieved by the

presence and example of the well-to-do. The first duty of many Christians is to make their homes among the poor, and until this duty is more generally fulfilled progress will lag. Then the Church has to alter, it may be, the whole ideas of Christian people on questions of property. It has to teach that there are duties as well as rights. It has to quicken the conscience of the slum owner; it has to educate the children of the rich on the questions of rent. If such duties are not discharged, the reason for failure must be sought, not in a heightened, but in a lowered spirituality. The quickening of the Holy Ghost would compel the Church to make sure that no one is born damned into the world.

But while giving the fullest place to this duty, the Church has to go far beyond it. The problem is not solved in the least if we have houses and nothing but houses. The house must be turned into a home, and it may be that the more house the less home. We can see it not seldom in human life. The

little house where the young couple were so happy and so poor is exchanged for the mansion, but the mansion is not half so much home as the cottage was. If we could lodge each family in London in a palace, London might be further from God than she is now. For a home you must have a home-maker, and when the Church sends forth home-makers, she is working surely for the homing of the people. A young man comes into the house of God, and hearing the Word, receives the remission of sins and the gift of eternal life. Continuing in the grace of God, he becomes the head of a household round whom wife and children cling in loving trust and dependence. He becomes in his measure one of those who keep the life of a nation green, one of those whom the prophet foresaw when he said, "A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." A gay and thoughtless girl comes into the sanctuary, and her heart is yielded to the Son of God. She goes forth to be a true and tender woman, a home-maker

wherever she is, a home-maker always, even in eternity. Of those you teach from week to week many are home-makers, for the light of the home is often a good and dear child. There is no way so quick and sure of homing the people as to send out home-makers; and if the Church fails in that, no political or social success will strengthen her or forward the kingdom of God.

Nor must we too readily admit that it is useless to preach the Gospel to people in one room, people in a certain depth of poverty. It is now becoming fashionable to ridicule evangelists who went into courts of miserable dwellings and declared the great salvation. We are told that first the dwellings should have been cleared away, and then the Gospel should be preached. But how many evangelists have the means of clearing away the slums? Have they no message then for those who live in them? May they not say, "Silver and gold have I none," and preach the saving Name? At what point of poverty does it become impossible for men or women

to hear and receive the Gospel? Are there in London now any people poorer and more wretched than the little knot of forgotten Jews to whom Jesus said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? A great lawyer once remarked that he had never seen Christ's embrace of the children drawn to his conception. The children were beautiful, healthy, and happy. He imagined Christ—the Everlasting Father—as folding in His arms little children of the city, pale, thin, half-starved, half-naked. That would have been very like Him. I can discover nothing in the New Testament which forbids you or me to preach His glorious Gospel to the poorest, the neediest, the hungriest that comes within reach of our voices. If they receive that Gospel and obey it, their earthly condition will be changed, or they will learn to live undefiled in that condition. As it is, those who know the poor of London best are the first to testify to the love and faith that survive in the darkest places.

> The roar of London, the deep undersong,
> The myriad music of immortal souls
> High couraged, much enduring midst the lone
> Drear toil and gloom and weariness. It rolls
> Over me with all power, for in its tone
> The hearts I love in Christ beat with mine own.

These are the words of an east-end minister, who died at his post. Another keen observer has recently remarked that "a fierce craze for keeping the children straight is an almost universal note and dominant passion among the mothers of the very poor." Let us thank God and take courage.

Christians must never forget, as the public mind becomes more and more engrossed with economics, that reformers have had their day and done their work, but Christ Jesus and He alone still gives new life. He is not primarily the deviser of a social system, but the quickener of the individual. Instead of regeneration by organisation, He offers regeneration by inspiration. He sees life changed, shaped, and glorified by the life of God, and regards the future of society with a splendid and unfaltering hope. Without Him

no social changes will make the burden of loss lighter or the fountain of tears less bitter.

II

The Church is to be also the home of the people. For many, for most, the Church is a second home; but for a multitude it is all the home they can have. Cardinal Newman has written beautifully on the Church as a Refuge for the Lonely. It is a refuge for many who are old. "She was sixty years of age," says one, "seamed with small-pox, and in every seam the dust and smoke of London had left a stain. A life of labour and vanished children lay behind as well as before her. She had a troubled eye and a gaze which seemed to ask of the universe why it had given birth to her." But in her chapel she received strength in her heart to bear up. She had no power to take the kingdom of Heaven by violence, but she crept quietly in. She had only a world of gossiping neighbours and of little shops where she bought the barest needs

of her bare life, but she was happy. She knew her own troubles, but she knew also that help that met them, and she found it in the House of God. "My house," said Jesus, "shall be called a house of prayer for all," not a house of preaching, nor a house of philanthropy, nor a house of amusements, but a house of prayer. All men are capable of prayer, and growth in grace is a growth in knowledge of what the life of prayer may come to be. "My house is a house for all." This has been the shame and scandal of the Christian Church that for so long little has been done to welcome, much less to seek out, those who are not found within her walls. When we seek with a mind to bring in, when we hail with gladness the least, and the lowest, and the poorest, then we may speak of the Church as the house of Christ, the house of the Father. The day is coming, but we are only at its dawn. How good it is when the houseless, wind-beaten, rain-wet nobody sees the Father's door opening and His house receiving him to its heart!

For multitudes of young people there is no

home, only a place to sleep in. Then the churches must do special work. They must provide what the first home should ordinarily provide. They should come in to meet the needs of those for whom London has the aspect of "a desperate battlefield without ranks, without order, without pity, and with very little of discoverable purpose." What is legitimate in the institutional churches? Surely whatever is legitimate at home. The churches should provide a place for rest, for recreation, for the happy friendships which may ripen into love, for the meetings from which sweet and pure homes will be built in the future. But where there is the first home, these homes have their claim. It is not the duty of ordinary Christians to be continually going to church, whether for sermons or for amusements. They should find their happiness by their own fireside. There the intimacies are formed that grow into a strength that defies the world and death. There the consideration, the gentleness, the unselfishness of the Christian character are learned as they

are learned nowhere else. Life is low down and death is at the door when the home becomes tedious and irksome to the inmates —when they must have some outlet every night, or they are unhappy. Not even the Church can be suffered to be a rival to the home. But it is the clear duty of the Church to be both home and church to those who are homeless, homeless for all their years, or homeless on their way to homes.

I will add that the welcome to a church should include the welcome to all the privileges of the Church, and among the privileges I mean the labour and the sacrifices. All Christians have a yoke to bear, and they are not to be half-hearted in bearing it. Our new people should be told that there is some sacrifice they may make, some work they may take in hand. They should know that it is more blessed to give than to receive. In a true home every one, down to the little children, contributes a part to the making of the home. In the Church every one should help in the making of the Church. That is no true

Christian Church where some one part of the community subscribes and works for another. There is no true Church where there is not a community of love and labour. That community is witnessed at the Lord's Table, and we should never rest till those who are joined to Christ and to one another should be one in the closest and dearest bond of union.

III

One word on the home above. When we have homed the people in the earthly home and in the Church, our work is not done. They are to be homed at last with Christ.

They tell us that the desire for immortality is ceasing from the world. It will not cease till men cease to love Christ, to love one another. Least of all, I think, will it cease in London, where, if anywhere, life feels like a real fight. The individual is so little here among the crowds that come and go. He vanishes as it seems like an insect in the summer sun and is as little missed. "What

is London but a vast graveyard of stilled hopes in which the thin gnat-swarm of the present population dances its short dance above the daily, growing, indisturbable detritus of all the past at rest?" Men in London who are fighting the battle bravely with a smile upon their faces will often wish themselves well out of it, and at peace for ever. How many of us have cravings that will never be quiet though we do not speak of them—cravings that would be intolerable if it were not for our hope in Christ? The heart that seems entangled in the cares of this life is often far in the spiritual city with Christ and with those who have gone before. One who made full acquaintance with bereavement was asked if she ever received intimations of the presence of those who were parted from her. She replied, "I sometimes feel a drawing." Your own Bishop Simpson of America once was preaching on heaven, and suddenly electrified the audience by a cry of his fatherly heart. "Oh," said he, "what would heaven be to me without my Willie?" It is not that the bereaved would

have them back. They will never know earthly cares and fears. They are "thrice three times walled in emerald from our mortal mornings grey." But we are indeed strangers and pilgrims on the earth, men and women for whom life is full of deaths, little deaths and great deaths. But what of it if through them the summer land calls us to its bosom, and if Christ is waiting to receive us to Himself in the land where homes are safe.

If the Church is to home the people, many must be content to sacrifice the earthly home, and like St. Paul to be "lone on the land and homeless on the water." It is told of St. Francis Xavier that he was journeying once from Rome with the Portuguese Ambassador on his way to Lisbon, where he was to embark on his missionary voyage to the Indies. As the travellers descended the Pyrenees they entered a rich and fertile valley, and saw among the trees the towers and roofs of Castle Xavier, the ancestral home of Francis. The Ambassador proposed to halt that the missionary might bid farewell. "With your

permission, noble sir," returned Francis, "we will pursue our journey. My home is now in the place wherever it shall please our Lord to call me. I have given up my earthly home to Him." We have to help those who make such sacrifices, and to help them generously and cheerfully. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who though He was homed, yet for our sakes became homeless, that we through His homelessness might be homed.

THE BLESSING OF PERSECUTION[1]

O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.—ISAIAH xxxviii. 16.

THE beginning of the twentieth century has brought Free Churchmen to a new time in the good fight of faith wherein they continually struggle. In England, many thousands of Nonconformists have appeared before the magistrates to be treated as criminals. Many of our most honoured Christian ministers and laymen have been imprisoned again and again. In all probability there are many others to follow them. They have been put to this suffering on account of their refusal to submit to a law that violates their conscience, a law which, by the admission of many who voted for it, is not

[1] Conference sermon of the Methodist New Connexion, June 14th, 1905, preached in Belgrave Chapel, Leeds.

just, and cannot last. From Wales, we have continual tidings of revival and revolt. A new spiritual life has awakened in the hills and valleys, and at the same time the people, headed by their legally-appointed Councils, are resisting, at great cost, an attempt at coercion in the name of an alien Church. In Scotland, the United Free Church has passed through a year of unprecedented trial—of trial which has been nobly and devoutly borne, but which will leave an abiding mark upon those who have suffered it. The sufferers will not claim the honours of the martyrs who have the more glorious lot and the nearer and dearer place, but they have suffered, and the suffering has not been confined to hard names, evil words, and unkind sayings. It has meant for many severe impoverishment and anxiety, and such pain may be very real and very hard to bear. It is well that we should judge ourselves very humbly, and recognise that these things may be sent, and are sent, to remind us of our great unworthiness. But we do well to take them as tokens of God's especial love. We

have been made to realise that the affliction which has to be endured and exhausted by the Church, has yet to be filled up. It will be good for us if life is imbued with the feeling that all they who live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, that suffering is as much our way of bearing testimony and winning victory as labour can ever be, and that by these things, by humiliations, by anxieties, by impoverishment, men live, and in these is the life of their spirits.

I

Let me recall Christ's own anticipation of persecution and suffering, an anticipation fulfilled in Himself, in His Apostles, and in His Church. We hardly realise the wonder of His first prophecy. At the very dawn and outset of His career He knew what the course and the end would be. He had none of an enthusiast's dreams, none of the bright and daring hopes so often quenched in blood. The morning of His life was red, and

all the weather of the day was foul, and His sun set as He knew it would, in a tempest of agony and woe. When He opened His lips on the mountain, He said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." The words are weighted with meaning, and full of immortal consolation. The beatitude is the highest and most glorious of all the blessings. He Himself proved it to the uttermost when, that He might make reconciliation for the sins of His people, He suffered without the gate. All through the history of His Church there have been the painful following, the hard battle, the heroic death. Until the spiritual earth and heaven are completed we shall have them again.

It was persecution that ended by degrees

the earthly life of all the Apostles. One by one, they filled up His sacrifice of weariness, crowning life by death. The words of one are enough: "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep—" This is among the first pages of the noble and unfinished catalogue of Christian labours and Christian suffering. So much did the Church suffer at the beginning, that one of the early Christian poets represents the cities of the earth, each offering the Lord when He came to judge the world the relics of the martyrs who reposed in them. Not one city in all the habitable world failed of her gift. So it has been all through. Some have gone home by a short, rough road; others have toiled on with bleeding feet for years, ere they reached their last cross. In Japan, Christianity was literally killed out by the killing of every Christian. One form of torture there was to feed the mothers delicately, and to starve the children. The cries of their famished little ones would, it was hoped, shake the constancy

of the mothers, and lead them to trample on the Cross. The martyrs have been tortured on the rack till every bone has been dragged from its place, and every nerve of the body has thrilled with agony. They have been flung into the dungeon to recover strength, and then been taken through the street loaded with chains to the place where they were burned to death. More dreadful even than the public martyrdoms have been the cases where the saints have been put to death in secret. In the Low Countries the Baptists used to be drowned alone and in the darkness, in huge vats of water, hearing nothing but the jests of the murderers who had "given the dipper his last dip." Even in the form of physical torture, martyrdom continues. It is not long since Christ had His witnesses in China. But in the Scripture, "others had trial of cruel mockings," is put beside the physical outrages, and in one form or another martyrdom continues, and apparently will continue. We are in the same country which our Lord passed through, and we are fighting in His

army. We must have patience, not for a short time only, not for a long time only, but to the end. The opposition to truth and freedom takes ever new forms. Such a difficulty rises up, such a trial stands in the way, such a temptation opposes, so we shall have it till the voice comes, "Ye have compassed this desert long enough," till the eternal day breaks, the one day known to the Lord when at eventime it shall be light.

Indeed, it is part of our dedication. Should we be the followers of Christ if we had no trouble in our following? He executed the office of a true prophet, and He warned us well. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." He foresaw the mercilessness of His foes, and He foresaw what was harder to bear, the faithlessness of His disciples, that winter of love when all should forsake Him and flee. But He recovered His wandering sheep and brought them to the fold again. He will keep them there, but only as they are willing to drink His cup. Have we not promised to

follow Him? Did we not say, "Where Thou lodgest I will lodge"? Not in the great house of splendour, but beneath the humble roof, or even under the stars. Said I not, "Where Thou diest I will die"? and as Thou didst die on the Cross, let me die on mine. And seeing as Thou didst not seek to be taken down till the evening of the day, help me to be brave and patient till Thy word sets me free.

II

The effect of persecution and of accepted suffering is life. When a great trial befell his Church, it was said of the leader by many who little knew, "This will kill him." By these things *men* live. It might kill weaklings, but if we are bound up with Christ, filled with His Spirit, the trial of faith is the minister and stimulant of life. We know how it is in the daily experience. We know how any great initiation into sorrow sobers, deepens, strengthens every nature that has in it the germs of good. There are regions of thought and feeling which

may not be profitably discussed by those who have not traversed them. Many and many a time, even natures that seem poor and meagre are strangely enriched and ennobled by a baptism of fire. For the Christian, the trial brings the inner peace and power, and so we have the succession maintained in the world of men and women who out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the army of the aliens. The soul that seemed rootless and fruitless has, again and again, disclosed itself under trial as a branch of the True Vine that rejoiceth God and man. Persecution has killed Churches, but hardly ever, I think, save in cases where the members have actually been exterminated. It will destroy a feigned profession, but by these things the true, the brave, the faithful live—as they never live when the sun went on shining, and the winds were soft, and the world wore a fair face.

"By these things men live." Can they go on bearing these things? The hope of the enemy is always to "wear out" the saints of

the Most High. Doubtless there are those who fail under protracted fire. There are times when there is no hope of exemption on earth, times when long years stretch out before the Christian in which he is to have no rest, is never to be out of anxiety and strain. But is it possible to continue when that is so? It is not only possible, but it has been done by the grace of Christ over and over and over. Indeed, a great master of the spiritual life has said that the bravest and wisest and tenderest of all Christians have been those who have passed through such an experience. One whose name is ever mentioned in Scotland with peculiar reverence—Alexander Peden—was overheard praying, near the end of his wonderful days. "Lord," he said, "Thou hast been kind and good to auld Sandy." So he measured the changing lights and shadows.

I almost shrink from using the words of St. Paul, "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Yet he would have sanctioned the use for all Christians bearing

testimony. They, too, have the marks of the Lord Jesus. Every scar and wrinkle, every suffering of body and mind, every trace left on the countenance by loneliness, anxiety, disappointment, drudgery, endured for Christ is a mark of the Lord Jesus. What marks St. Paul bore we cannot tell. We only know that they were legible in him, as they are not legible in many Christians of these days. "Whose I am and Whom I serve." Yes, the Lord best knew how His apostle served Him through imprisonment, mockery, peril, hunger, and thirst and nakedness, through the care of all the churches. This merciful Lord called him to serve Him finally and more illustriously. "Thou must be brought before Cæsar." So the old man was led along the Ostian way to die. It was not wonderful or strange to Paul, for he had been taught at the beginning how great things he must suffer for Christ's Name's sake. Did he ever flinch? When he said, "From henceforth let no man trouble me," did he claim an exemption from pain? He had a good right, if any one ever had a right,

but he was the last to use it. When he said, "Let no man trouble me," he did not mean to be freed from his cross. He was not weary, or half-hearted, or in quest of a quiet life. He was the last to seek to be taken down before evening, or to pause in the middle of his race. When he said, "Let no man trouble me," he was speaking to those who meant to be his friends, to those who wished him not to go up to Jerusalem. All persuasions, entreaties, tendernesses which would hinder him, he wished to be done with. "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide me." And so he pleaded with them to loose him, and let him go. This was a nature covetous of the great things his Lord had appointed him to endure. He had suffered enough for one, but he was not content. By these things *men* live.

"In all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me and make me to live." The outward man may perish; St. Paul's body was frailer and feebler with every passing day.

It was sinking to its fall, but the life of the spirit was waxing and blazing. There may come sometimes a dark gloom, a period of obscuration, when the bravest is weary, almost inclined to give up, disposed to take an easier way. But the life that seems dead and buried for the hour, as the Lord Himself in the grave of Joseph of Arimathæa, shall rise again at the words, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

By these things men live. They are brought into a true fellowship. If we are true friends, we are united more closely to those friends who have been treated with cruelty and injustice. We cling to them more fondly and tenderly than ever. Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardised their lives unto the death in the high places of the field. Not peoples, though they were once distinct; they were one people joined in one grand and noble struggle, and therefore in one unbreakable communion.

III

The lessons are very simple, but they go very deep. Trials borne for Christ bring us to the heart of Christ. The nearer we are to Him, the more calmly we shall look on the sunshine and the shadow too. It is His sunshine, and it is His shadow. Joined to Him we shall arm ourselves with the same mind, and pray for those who have wronged us or are wronging us. If they refuse to own us or receive us, let us hope for the time when the clouds will pass, and for the day of Chirst, when all the flock will be gathered in the fold upon the everlasting hills. Let us pray that God will protect us and preserve us in whatever he has appointed of joy and of sorrow. Every time of trial is a time when the New Country becomes very near. We shall soon pass from the Church militant to watch from the eternal shore the tempest-tossed servants of our Master making for the haven, troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed,

but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. The extraordinary vividness and certainty with which the eternal world has been apprehended in times of persecution must strike every one who has studied the annals of the martyrs. By bearing pain and loss in the Christian way, we shall persuade men. "It shall turn unto you for a testimony," said our Lord Himself. The faithfulness unto death of Christ's witnesses has done more, perhaps, even than the preaching of the Gospel, to persuade the world that Christ lives and reigns.

By emphasising the heroic side of Christianity we shall win and keep our children. The fidelity to brave and loyal ancestors is a religion in itself—a religion that is working wonders in the world to-day. The faith and courage of our fathers did much to persuade their sons.

> O the way sometimes is low,
> And the waters dark and deep,
> And I stumble as I go.

But I have a tryst to keep :
It was plighted long ago
With some who lie asleep.

And though days go dragging slow,
And the sad hours gravewards creep,
And the world is hushed in woe,

I neither wail nor weep,
For He would not have it so,
And I have a tryst to keep.

"Lovest thou Me?" The old question is repeated keenly, sharply, persuadingly. The root is love. Though faith may be clouded and hope may be feeble, love lives on. We have never been left in any doubt as to the justice of our cause. We have never needed even to talk it over. "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." The road of righteousness is as straight as a rule can make it. We are fighting, thank God, not about trifles, but about the inalienable rights of Christians and of Christian Churches. We have no fear of the issue. The Free Churches shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.

Will you stand fast? Will you carry your burden true-heartedly, simply, steadily? Will you say, Whoever desires to be taken down from the Cross, whoever desires to rest before the battle is over, so by God's grace not I? If so, you will gather strength from falls, and resolution from defeats, and hasten the time when your dedication to Christ shall be without let or hindrance. We have our appeal more cogent, more winning than ever it was to those outside, and especially to the young. We are not asking you to join the rich, the fashionable, the privileged. We are asking you to help those who, amid many hardships, difficulties, and preplexities, are seeking to fight the good fight of faith, and to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Will you join us? Will you help us in this great hour?

Couldst thou love Me when friends are failing,
Because fast paling
Thy fortunes flee?
Couldst thou prevent thy lips from wailing,
And say, "I still have Thee"?

Couldst thou love Me when wealth is flying,
The night-blast sighing
Through life's proud tree?
Couldst thou withhold thy heart from dying,
And find its life in Me?

Couldst thou love Me when creeds are breaking,
Old landmarks shaking
With wind and sea?
Couldst thou restrain the earth from quaking,
And rest thy heart in Me?

Couldst thou love Me when storms are roaring,
Their torrents pouring
O'er mart and lea?
Couldst thou on larger wings be soaring,
And hear all calm in Me?

Couldst thou love Me when death is nearing,
A mist appearing
In all but Me?
If then thy heart cast out its fearing,
Thy love shall perfect be.

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE[1]

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—JOHN iii. 16.

THERE are many, I am well aware, who view with secret misgivings the opening of new places of worship. Says one, "Religion has changed—advanced or receded, as you will—like everything else. The creed in our day was simple and severe. To us right or wrong meant heaven or hell, neither more nor less. Now what is Christianity? Who can show us?" It is even affirmed that Christianity is a wreck, that the foundations of the old temples of truth and peace have been undermined, and that buildings like these are the

[1] Sermon preached at the opening of the North United Free Church, Aberdeen, August 1905.

futile monuments of a glorious but tragical delusion.

Now we are not concerned to deny the immense advance in thought and knowledge, the ceaseless floods of sunlight that have poured into every region where the human mind energises. We have asserted in this Church, and at great cost, the right and the duty of every Christian Church to follow the leadings of the Spirit; but our Gospel remains unaffected. We can preach it, if that were possible, more fully than our fathers could. That Gospel is no other than my text: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In expounding it I shall adopt the divisions of a celebrated preacher. We have here (1) the Lake; (2) the River; (3) the Pitcher; (4) the Draught. The *Lake*—God so loved the world; the *River*—that He gave His only begotten Son; the *Pitcher*—that whosoever believeth on Him; the *Draught*—should have everlasting life.

I

The Lake is the Love of God. "God so loved the world." It is not too much to say Christians have shrunk from the full force of this great word. They have even interpreted the words to mean the elect sinners of the world. Where they have not gone so far as that, they have stopped short of the clarion proclamation. The words "God is love" are not to be found in our Catechism or in our Confession. They do not occur, so far as I remember, in any of the Confessions of the Reformed Church. No matter. We go back to the supreme standard, the Word of God, and we find the mystery there. God loves the world and each soul in the world. The love of the mass is the love of the individual. Each single soul is beloved as if there were no other. There is no limitation. God loves each soul of our fallen family. The worst and the most forgotten is strained to His bosom. Is it an easy thing to say? Nobody said it till Christ said it. Even after Christ said it

many of His most faithful servants have feared to repeat it. I shall never forget how Professor Elmslie, in the brief delirium before death, when his mind was wandering, came back over and over again to "God is Love, God is Love; I will go out and tell this to all the world. They do not know it."

Yet the lips of the most faithful must tremble sometimes as they repeat it. The sorrows of the world seem to rise up and silence them. Can we trace the love in the agony of human life? The burden and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world are too much for us all at times.

> Nature, red in tooth and claw
> With ravine, shrieks against the creed.

The hideous sense of wrong, of sin and sorrow, of vice and crime, mars the scene wherever we turn. Think of the sorrow of the world. The child was meant to be happy, and it seems at first as if exquisite and perfect provision were made for that happiness, and there is no sadder

thing than to watch and to behold how the light-heartedness of youth is gradually overcome. Moth and rust corrupt, thieves break through and steal, temptations arise and shake and overthrow. We guard our poor citadel as well as we may, but the assault comes from the unexpected quarter and overwhelms us. No progress, no discovery, will lighten the load or lessen the pain. There are evils that may be avoided, but so long as death and sin remain, the woe must remain, and doubtless as the world grows older men grow more sensitive; the pang is keener, the wound is deeper, and heals more slowly. And what shall we say to the wrongs of the world, the defeats of good, the triumphs of evil? The righteous perish, and that is hard; but no man layeth it to heart—that is harder still. The dark enigmas and incomprehensible anomalies of existence make us pause and fear.

Then we say, "Can God love us, so direly defeatured by sin as we are?" So gentle a Christian poet as Keble tells us that even

the hearts of the saints cannot bear mortal scrutiny.

> Then keep the softening veil in mercy drawn,
> Thou who canst love us, tho' Thou read us true.

Can it be that God loves Nero, that He loves Judas? Can it be that God cares for saints and martyrs, whom He abandons to defeat and agony and death? One thinks of St. Bernard's question, when, absorbed in meditation, he rode by the Lake of Geneva, and said at evening, "Has anybody seen the lake?" We have to answer, "No man hath seen the lake at any time," and yet we know that God's awful attributes

> All are but ministers of Love,
> And feed his sacred flame.

II

For there is a River that makes glad the city of God. We know of the lake because we know of the river. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son. The course of true love never did run smooth,

and the course of the divine love ran rough indeed. We do not preach that an easy way has been thrown open, and that now the gate is no longer strait and the road no longer narrow. No, God so loved that He *gave*. It is not merely that He sent His Son: He did much more. He gave His Son, and as the apostle more fully expresses it, "He delivered Him up to the death for us all." That was the course of the Divine love. The love of the Father is the source of the Atonement. He gave in love. It is most true that the Lord gave Himself in love. Isaac was led to the sacrifice willing and blind, Christ went to His Cross willing and open-eyed. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared Me," a body to be scourged, tortured, crucified. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Thy will, O my God." When men think that they get rid of the old and severe theology when they teach in a false sense that God is Love, they are rebuked by this text. We do not become mawkish and

sentimental because we preach the love of God; life and salvation will even more be solemn and sin more dreadful as we follow the course of the Divine love.

When we are asked, as we have been asked in *Robert Elsmere*, and in much literature that has preceded and followed it, why we do not get rid of the sternness and awfulness of religion and rest content simply with preaching the Fatherhood of God, our answer is plain. The one proof of God's love that will ever convince the world is the Cross of Christ. Said the great German, "If I were God, the sorrows of the world would break my heart." He knew not what he said. The sorrows of the world *did* break the Heart of hearts. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, even unto blood, even unto broken-heartedness. Why do you not say that God is Father and that all is to be well, and leave the Christ out? Why do you not read the text, "God so loved the world, that He gave to every one everlasting life"? If any one proclaims that God is love, upon what

facts is he to rest his arguments? Does he find the love of God in the mass of misery and vice in which the world around is weltering? Belief in the love of God has been maintained and propagated in the shadow of the Cross, and only there. Apart from that, where is the proof that God is a Father and not merely a force? In the Old Testament they did not know it, though there are passages that dimly shadow it. Christ came in time. The heart of the world was failing. Martyr after martyr, prophet after prophet had died without a token. He came to change the cross into a throne, and the shroud into a robe, and death into a sleep, and defeat into everlasting triumph.

III

All this love may run in full flood past our door and never reach us, unless we take the pitcher — "Whosoever believeth on Him." We all know what it is to trust and to be deceived. It is natural to trust, and we go on believing till we are surrounded by defaced

and abolished idols. Human stays may fail us, but there is a moment when we give ourselves to the Divine. To trust Christ is not merely to believe with the intellect the truth about Him, but to commit our hearts to His keeping. What all that is going to mean we can never know at first, but I believe there is in the life of every Christian one moment which may or may not be remembered when the turn is taken. In the life of every one who has really tried to make a high use of the years, there is always a point where the road ceases to descend and begins to climb upward. What has happened? Perhaps some fervent and rousing word has been carried home by the Holy Spirit. There has been a bereavement—perhaps some one has died who is so cruelly missed that the rest of life seems dark and cold as the later hours of a winter day. There has been a disappointment, perhaps, in something on which the heart has been fixed, and for consolation it has turned to the Refuge and the Lover of souls. To one who sat dreaming in her garden, repeating

the old enigmas, "Was He? Was He not? If He was not, from whence came I? If He is, what am I, and what am I doing with my life?" a voice seemed to speak. The voice spoke and said, "Act as if I were, and thou shalt know I Am!" She obeyed, and soon He revealed Himself. In this way and that is the story told, is the experience passed through, but in essence it is always the same. It is a committal for time and for eternity, for life and for death, to the Lord of all worlds. Then is the channel opened between the poor, narrow, needy life and the great lake of love. Then the Divine Lover has His way with the soul.

IV

"*Should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" That dark word "perish" is significant indeed. The tendency of all life, apart from the Divine connection and renewal, is towards decay and death. That, we know, is true in the natural sphere, and whenever we begin to think we see it to be true in the spiritual. Leave the

Bible out of account if you will, you never do away with the great and sombre reality of retribution. Its reality presses more and more hardly upon the modern mind, even when that mind is in revolt against Christianity. Blot out the word "hell" from Scripture and you do not blot it out of the world. The fires of hell are burning all around us. There are men and women here to-night who would give all they possess very gladly, if they could lay their hands upon one hour of madness and pluck it from the past. There is no power to enable us to drown the reality of the wretchedness that is among us and about us, oppressing and maiming and marring existence. Perishing in its more obvious and terrible forms we have all seen. We have seen bright young lives clouded, over-darkened, devastated, destroyed. But there is such a thing as perishing respectably, and that is far more common. A man may succeed in life, and attain his low ambitions, and pass well among his fellow-townsmen, and yet when you contemplate him you know that

he has perished, that his ideals are gone, that there is now no longer any communication between him and his Maker, that his soul is gone out of him. They are more who perish in silk and broadcloth than they who perish in rags. A nation may have a period of great triumph and external wealth, and yet if it has in its heart the cancer of lust, it has perished, and the outward will one day correspond with the inward, and the judgment of God be made visible. What is to rescue from perishing? What is to keep the fires alive—the loftiness, the unworldliness, the willingness to die, the aspirations after purity, truth, goodness? *Whosoever believeth on Him* shall not perish, but—it goes on to say—have everlasting life.

It is life which is the Draught from the river of love, which, as we know, is untouched by death. Our Lord Himself worked out His promise when He died for us and rose again. We know now that the solemn fact of death does not break the continuity of the redeemed existence. Since the Lord of Life lay in the grave and rose again, the grave has been but

the resting-place of the bodies that are still united to Him. But I think, as the years go on, that we do not look upon physical death as the great antagonist in life. There are worse enemies than that. There are the temptations within and the temptations without. We are almost torn to pieces by the external and internal struggle: boiling passion, urgent appetite, wild ambition, assail and hurt the soul, and the fear is that often all the life may be quenched. But the moment we believe, we are made children of the resurrection, and there is given to us that life which neither the world nor grief can quench. After years and years we can say, "Blessed be God, that though the lamp has flickered a thousand times, it has not gone out." We have had our share, we say, and sometimes it seems almost more than our share, of the vicissitudes of existence. Change and decay in all around we see. "Passing away, saith the world, passing away." But if we are in Christ there is something within us that has lived, that lives, and that will live. Of that life we shall

never ask whether it is worth living. The life of nature, the earthly life, the life that is so heavily weighted with sorrow and crushed with care, may come to be held very lightly. It shrinks, dwindles, draws itself within meaner lines every day. Many of us weary of it long before it ends. Others feel, with the American poet—

> How many times have I lain down at night
> And longed to fall into that gulf of sleep,
> Whose dreamless deep
> Is haunted by no memory of
> The weary world above:
> And thought myself most miserable that I
> Must impotently lie
> So long upon the brink
> Without the power to sink
> Into that nothingness, and neither feel nor think!
>
> How many times, when day brought back the light
> After the merciful oblivion
> Of such unbroken slumber,
> And once again began to cumber
> My soul with her forgotten cares and sorrows,
> And show in long perspective the gray morrows,
> Stretching monotonously on,
> Forever narrowing, but never done,

> Have I not loathed to live again, and said
> It would have been far better to be dead,
> And yet, somehow, I know not why,
> Remained afraid to die!

We may have lived in war with the world, the flesh, and the devil; we may have been feeble, faithless, half-hearted, and cowardly. Relapse may have succeeded relapse, till mercy would have been wearied out, if mercy were a human thing. Yet somehow, through grace, we have not turned back, and however distant, halting, covered with the mire of innumerable falls, we are still trying to do the will of God, we are seeking the way to Zion with our faces thitherward. If this is so, then this trembling flame, which is still alight, which has burned on through the temptations of time, will be steady and enduring in that kingdom where nothing that enters can ever die.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." How is it with thee, my brother,

and with thee, my sister? He has sent me to-night to declare to thee His Gospel, to offer to thee here and now His Son and that life. His Word is gone forth to the end of the earth, and has reached even to thyself. "Stoop down, and drink, and live." Why should we not, every one of us, have and hold and cherish and keep that Eternal Life?

ASPECTS OF THE MYSTICAL UNION[1]

We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.—EPHESIANS v. 30.

THE depth and intimacy of the mystical union between our Lord and His believers are nowhere more boldly expressed than in the words of the Epistle to the Ephesians, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

There is a kind of Christianity which has been popular in recent years. It teaches that we are Christians in so far as we imitate the outward life of Christ, the Man of Nazareth. Its test is the question, "What would Jesus do?" If we ask that question and answer it,

[1] Address to the National Free Church Council in the Central Hall, Birmingham, on March 8, 1906.

and carry the answer into action, then, it is said, we are Christians. Be it far from us to depreciate the value of such a test. To summon before our minds in moments of distraction, perplexity, and pain the pure, calm, heroic image of Jesus is often a remedy sovereign in its efficacy. But such an imitation can by no means cover the whole of life, nor solve its deepest mysteries. Our Lord spent His few years on earth in very narrow circumstances, in a simple society not reached by the problems that confront and vex us now. From the months, for the time is to be reckoned by months, of His public life, He passed by the Resurrection and the Ascension to the Eternal Throne. His manhood has been taken up into God, and He is now Incarnate and Supreme. It is this Christ of the exaltation to Whom the faithful are joined in a living, loving, lasting union. It is not with the Man of Nazareth, but with the reigning Redeemer that they are one. As regards the Christ of Palestine, there are many questions we may put and fail to obtain an

answer. Did He care for poetry, for art, for literature, for the splendours and discoveries of the imagination? We can hardly tell. We know that He loved the glory of the lilies in the Syrian fields, and watched the red of evening burn upon the Mediterranean wave. But we know also that He was absorbed in the thought that His brief, rough passage through earth was constantly bringing Him nearer the Cross, where He was to give His life as a ransom for many. Did He enter into the problems of political economy, of civic rights, of social wellbeing? It is very difficult to say that He did. The processes by which His words have been racked to favour this side and that in politics and in sociology have proved fruitless. He left outside all such questions; He left much on one side; He confined Himself to the work which the Father gave Him to do; He kept Himself sinless that He might offer that sacrifice of substitution for the guilty with which the Father is well pleased. He found a simple and oppressed society, and He pointed a path

out of the oppression, not by political changes, but by the direct approach of the weary to His own compassionate and rest-giving heart.

On the other hand, when we turn to Him as Very God of Very God, the life within the life revealing Himself in many ways, all is different. It is to Him thus revealed that trusting hearts are wedded, and He can solve all their problems, and lift the burden of all their sad need. From everlasting to everlasting He recognises and inspires all that is lovely and excellent and useful in the minds of men. The lasting triumphs of imagination, the hard-won successes of reason, the long labour of science, all are dear to Him, for they are merely approaches to the Eternal Reason, the Eternal Imagination. So then the business of the Christian is not the bare, outward imitation of His earthly years in Palestine, nor the simple following of the first disciples who set their feet in His lonely track. It is union with the enthroned Saviour, God-Man, that is the goal of the Christian life.

Though many who use the phrase employ

it without evil intention, yet certainly we are to condemn the counsel, "Be Christs." There is only one Christ; there is one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. There is one Head crowned and anointed, and only one. For the rest, it is sufficient that they should be Christians—sharing in the benefits of His life, His death, and His resurrection-triumph. We can indeed say of Him most surely that He walked in Palestine more unerringly than Plato, or Confucius, or any great teacher of the world, in the sphere appointed him. It was He and He alone Who never swerved even for a moment from the straight paths of righteousness and love. But we want to do more than to follow Him in these ways. We have to set our feet in paths He never trod, and we want the strength that is to keep us true. Assuredly, Christianity is the manifestation of the life that is an example. But we want much more than a flawless example. We have seen in the lower paths many fair and lovely things, but they have not touched us, except perhaps

to compunction or remorse. We need the mystical union. We need to take in its full strength the truth that we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, and that He lives now as a human body with a human soul, and imparts life to the frail and trembling spirits that stumble in their following of His way.

What we need is a union which exists even when we are not conscious of it. That is, our union with Christ is not identical with communion. Sometimes the glory of our right in Him bursts upon us like a strong sunshine. More often it is obscured. It is there, however, all the while, whether the cloud abides or lifts. In the second group of the Pauline epistles we find much, and very much, about the mystical union between Christ and the believer. The apostle tells us that though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him so no more. We know Him after the spirit. The well-spring is opened in the heart. In communion as well as in union, we deal directly with the risen Lord. There is an outward revelation which

is most precious, but the inward revelation is more precious still. We do not lose the historical Jesus. We do not lose any deed He wrought, any word He spoke, any agony He endured. Each is more precious than gold. The historical Jesus and the risen Lord are one; but the historical Jesus would be little to us if we had not the risen Lord, and it is the revelation of the Resurrection and the Enthronement which glorifies the earthly life in Palestine. The first Adam is of the earth, earthy; the second Adam is a Quickening Spirit and the Lord from heaven. We are saved through the Atonement, and saved into the union. The fact of the union is the pivot of the entire theology. Take the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and mark how the mystical union of the believer with Christ dominates the whole field of life. In the first place, it makes factions in the Christian Church impossible. The raging of the factions exists just in proportion as the union with the one Lord is lost. Then it is the union with Christ that makes marriage spiritual and mystical.

Family life is sanctified in Christ, and those who are one in Him have that which resists all the fraying, all the severances of the earthly years. Then we read that the Lord's Supper is an emblem of union because it is the means of communion with Christ's Body and Blood. Then we are taught that the union of Christ with humanity means a restored humanity—a subject to be developed a little more fully. The summing up of the whole is the interpenetration of the believer's life by the supernatural life of Christ. We shall try to apply this principle to some of the present difficulties of to-day.

We have spoken of the mystical union, a union between redeemed humanity—body and soul—and the exalted Redeemer, Incarnate on the Eternal Throne. We—body and soul—are the members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. We dwell in Him; He dwells in us. He springs up in our hearts and rises to all eternity. Let us see how this great and ruling truth helps us to confront the problems of life.

I

Consider its relation to the social work of the Church. Many of us remember the time when a very sharp line was drawn between the spiritual and the secular, and the spiritual was exalted. The preacher's business was to work for the salvation of souls. The Church was a building for the worship of God and the preaching of the Gospel. It was occupied two or three times a week, and for the rest quite useless. Philanthropy was held to be distinct from Christianity. It was inspired by Christianity, no doubt, and was good in itself, but it was not allowed to invade the sphere of the Church's true activity. As for recreation, it was thought outside the Church's mission, and was even regarded in some quarters as hostile to the spiritual energies of the faithful. By and by there came menaces and reproaches from the leaders of the working people. Worse than that, we became aware of the fact that the people were drifting away from organised Christianity. Many of us well

remember that we were irritated by these challenges. We had been brought up to believe that our business was to bring souls to Christ, and that if we could do that, other problems would gradually solve themselves. We forgot that the Church once made it her special business to care for the poor, and that when this became the function of the State, a true and precious link was broken. Nor can it be denied that in some early experiments in social Christianity the whole stress of labour seemed to go towards the satisfaction of earthly needs, while the hunger of the soul and the thirst of the spirit and the nakedness of the whole nature were ignored and forgotten. A true conception of the mystical union makes things clear. It helps us to see that the threats were prophetic invitations to the work of Christ. We may have been very indignant when people said, "It would be a far better thing to drain the houses of the poor than to give them churches." Now we see that the two things are not to be set against one another, that both are to be sought.

Now we perceive that the Christ, Who is Incarnate and Supreme, is united to the bodies and the souls of His people, and we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. So we perceive that His work of redemption has gone wider than we thought, and that it extends to the bodies as well as to the souls of men. What is done merely for the body is a step towards salvation. Looking round his great congregation one Sunday night, Mr. Spurgeon spoke of the extremities to which some were reduced. "Some of you," he said, "are hungry, and do not know where to turn for a morsel of bread. Has it even come to this?" Whoever fed the hungry, worked towards the Christian salvation. All social work takes a new colour and a happy radiance when it is done in the thought of the union—in the remembrance that Christ died for the body as well as for the soul, and that He means to have with Him the whole man, body and soul, in the House not made with hands.

II

It is the thought of the mystical union that helps us to understand the resurrection of the body. When we realise that Christ took for our sakes the body as the temple of the Holy Ghost, we know that the body cannot really die. We may never be able to understand in its vast reaches the unfathomable argument of St. Paul when he deals in his first letter to the Corinthians with the theme of the resurrection. But it is clear at least that he utterly sets aside two extremes of thought. There was a time, and it may not have passed, when many good Christians talked about the body as merely a suit of clothes, to be laid away carelessly as a thing of no account. This is the expression used, I remember, by Professor De Morgan. He said: "Do with my body as you like: treat it as a worn-out garment; it does not matter what hole you bury it in." Something deep and ineradicable in the human mind has protested against this. When the reverence due to the dead is forgotten, Chris-

tianity has vanished, and something more than Christianity. Christ did not take our flesh as a garment to be laid aside. He took it as part of Himself. Then we have had another evil extreme. We have been taught the doctrine of the literal resurrection of the flesh. Now St. Paul wrote his chapter in the First Corinthians expressly to destroy both of these beliefs. He asserted the continuity of the body, and he denied explicitly the *literal* resurrection of the flesh. In his view, the body is united to Christ as well as the soul. There is an interdependence between the two in Him even when they are separated by death. Body and soul remain in union with Christ, and, in a day to be, body and soul will be united to make the one man in Christ Jesus before the throne of the Incarnate God. St. Paul teaches us that the body which shall be, is not the body that is. Nevertheless, it is not a new creation, but, in some sense known to God, a resurrection of the body in which we are at present. The body which we shall wear in glory is as truly the same body as we

are wearing now, as the body we are wearing now is the same body with which we were born. How? The essence of the identity between the body of the little child and the grown man or woman is impossible to define. Even so the relation between the body that we lay in the grave to become dust again and the glorified body, we cannot tell. But we know enough to perceive the beauty of the words of the Shorter Catechism: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, while their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection." These risen bodies will be like the body of the risen Lord. Changes unthinkable will have passed over them, but they will be the same. When He smote the gates of brass and snapped the bars of iron in sunder, and returned to His disciples from the dead, they did not know Him at first, but after a little time they knew Him. It was as when friends part and go out into foreign lands, and come back after years of toil and separation, and do

not know those whose faces they had gazed on from the beginning. But by and by something—a tone of voice, a look of love—brings recognition, and gradually the past is traced in the present. So death comes and separates the body from the soul for a time, but neither from Christ, and we look forward by faith to the ending of separations. A great citizen of Birmingham used to comfort himself very much with this Greek word, σαλπίσει, "the trumpet shall sound." Yes, the trumpet *shall* sound. All the New Testament is meaningless unless it teaches the coming of a day of days, when the old order shall end, and the new everlasting order begin. What reverence and care this should teach us for our own bodies, and what pity, wrath, and revenge should stir in our hearts to see the bodies for which Christ died starved and defiled and corrupted as they are in our great cities to-day!

III

May not this union with Christ help us to understand a little better the dark and terrible mystery of human suffering? What is our union with Christ? What did St. Paul pray that he might know? "That I may know Him and the fellowship of His suffering." It is a union in suffering. And you remember that the blessed Apostle also said: "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." What did he mean? Certainly he did not mean that he took part in the great atonement and oblation for the sin of the world. It did not mean that he had a part in the substitutionary sacrifice. But I think it meant as much as this—that in all our afflictions Christ is afflicted; that the sorrows of the members are the sorrows of the Head, and that on the Head rests in some mysterious fashion the burden which every member bears. The Apostle meant to teach the solidarity, the interdependence of the members of the supernatural Church on earth, redeemed by the

Blood of the Lamb. Did he not mean that we, the members throughout the world of this great body of which Christ is the Head, have to endure together a certain amount of suffering, and to fill up the measure before the day of triumph, release, and jubilee come? Does he not mean: "I may be suffering for another unknown to me, but that is all in the great plan." When I realise that I am "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," by faith I know that there is a meaning in what seems purposeless. We are familiar with the explanations of suffering. We are told that suffering means discipline, and it does, no doubt. But that will not explain every case. Often those who need the discipline do not suffer, and a saint who did not need it is racked with pain. Further, suffering often fails completely as a discipline, and ends in souring the temper and hardening the heart. May we not find comfort in the thought that the suffering, about which we cannot talk to any human being, is not only known to Christ, but is also felt by Christ? Is there not comfort also in

the thought that in Christ we are joined to the great mystical body, and things are rough with us that they may be lighter for others. Every Christian sorrow, however dumb and obscure, wins something, or carries something away from another.

So let me close by saying, Make room for Christ. The true union is when He takes the place of us, when He is within us as a second self, a second heart, a second conscience. That is the realisation of the union. But often we are not conscious that the union exists, though it is there. Christ lives within us, waking or sleeping, living or dying. Let us make room for Christ, and pray for the consummation of that union, that we may be counted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead.

THE FUTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH[1]

All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord.—PSALM xxii. 27.

WHAT is to be the future of the Church of Christ on earth? Is the kingdom of God advancing and still to advance? Often it seems to the faithful that they are in presence of a standstill, or even of a retrogression. They are tried, strained, surprised at the slow victories of faith. It seems as if the Gospel were slighted, put aside, failing of its full effect. Sometimes they have days of glorious triumph, but often the heart sinks before the continued and present power of evil. It is no wonder that this should be

[1] Preached at the Upper Chapel, Heckmondwike (Heckmondwike Lecture), on Wednesday morning, June 13, 1906.

so, for the demands and expectations are greater than before, and the difficulties are not less. The work grows heavier, and it does not always seem to grow clearer and more hopeful. So we perplex ourselves. We say, Is the power of Christians at home as great as it used to be? Is that power increasing or diminishing in the vast realms of heathendom? Are we bringing in converts in numbers proportionate to the growth in population? It is not easy for us to judge the truth of things around us, and if we can read the future it can only be by the light of revelation. "What are your prospects?" was the question put to an intrepid missionary. He answered, and he could never have bettered the reply, "They are as bright as the promises of God."

I

There are three theories of the future of Christianity which have been held by Christians.

(1) There are those who say that we are never to look for a glorious future to the Church on earth. There is to be no such thing as a universal spread of the Gospel. The Church is not to wax, but wane. The kingdom of Heaven has nothing to do with the world but to condemn it. It exists on earth to save the few out of the wreck, and the rest go, as was ordained, to perdition. The utmost we can hope to do is to rescue an elect soul here and there from the general catastrophe, leaving the nations to perish and the mass of mankind to become castaways. That view, though it bases itself on some facts which cannot be disputed, and also on some Scripture passages which might conceivably be interpreted in its favour, is now rightly rejected as wholly inconsistent with the general tenor of the Gospel, with the character of the God of grace, and with the promises of Holy Scripture.

(2) There is another view of which one hears very little in these days, though it was the doctrine of the early Church, and though

it may ground itself much more securely on the words of the New Testament—both in the Gospels and in the Epistles. It is that the power of good and the power of evil will alike increase. "Let *both* grow together until the harvest," is the word of our Lord. St. Augustine taught that, however the leaven of the Gospel may spread, the power of evil and the malignity of evil will advance. It is all contained in one dread word seldom spoken now—the word anti-Christ. The thought of anti-Christ was prominent in the early Church, even in the instruction given to catechumens. When instructed in the doctrine of the Second Advent of our Lord without sin unto salvation, pupils were taught that the ruthless, murderous, merciless, crafty spirit of anti-Christ would grow, and before the end seem to prevail. The Second Advent would come after the struggle, in which all the past sufferings of the Church would be far excelled, in which a persecution against the saints of God, such as had not been from the beginning, would sift the very elect. The saints would wrestle with

Satan in his own person, in a time of trouble such as had not been, in a time when iniquity would abound and the love of many would wax cold. In this Armageddon of the earth, the greatest of all the great conflicts which God had permitted to befall His Church, there would be a falling away, and so terrible would be the trial that except these days should be shortened no flesh should be saved, but for the elect's sake the days should be shortened. In that dark time the daily sacrifice would be taken away, words which were interpreted to mean the forcible cessation of all religious worship. St. Augustine doubted whether baptism would be administered during that period. Further, taking the words of our Lord, that the abomination that maketh desolate should be set up in the holy place, it was foretold that some terrible form of blasphemy with rites of devil-worship would be substituted for the service of Christ in the churches. The power seemingly victorious would work miracles, overwhelming the imagination with signs that might deceive the

very elect. The spirit of anti-Christ has never been quite dormant in the world. The Emperor Julian was taken as in a degree typical of the anti-Christ who was to come. In the French Revolution there were many of the works of anti-Christ, and we may freely admit that there are powers existing, and not so very far away, which might yet find the work of anti-Christ congenial. So then, in the view of the early Church, the kingdom of Christ would grow steadily; the kingdom of Satan would also grow steadily. The two hostile powers would come into conflict in a battle in which the Church would seem to tremble and waver. Then Christ Himself would appear and consume the anti-Christ by the breath of His mouth, and destroy him by the brightness of His coming.

(3) There is, thirdly, the theory of hope, the theory that in manifold ways, some apparent and some hidden, the kingdom of God keeps coming, and will come. There is the faith that the armies of the aliens, in spite of all we see, are being beaten back, and that in the end evil will gradually die out of the

living world and be merged in the good. Not that the solemn warnings of Scripture and the stern facts of life are ignored. The words of our Lord, so plain, so unmistakable, are not to be forgotten. "The enemy that soweth them is the devil." Our fight is not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with Satanic hosts on which no impression is made by what is called civilisation, or social reform, or intellectual enlightenment. But the promises look to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, to the flowing of all nations to the mountain of the Lord's House, to the day when they shall not hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. We are not to be surprised, not to be disheartened, at the strength and inveterate enmity of the hostile forces. We have been forewarned, and we are not to be in needless fear, not to be afraid where no fear is. Greater is He that is for us than all they that are against us. The day of the latter rain, the second Pentecost, is to

precede the coming of our Saviour, a blessed time when the prophecies will be seen in a new light. "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord." "Those beautiful questioning words of Isaiah about the Gentiles often occur to me," says one, "'Who are these that fly as doves to their windows?'—a flock of doves speeding to their homes, their ark of refuge. Noah's one dove, like the solitary Jewish Church, took refuge there from the wild waste of waters. But all kindreds, peoples, tongues, and nations shall fly to their stronghold in the latter times, their wings covered with silver and their feathers with yellow gold, white and lovely, though they have lien among the pots." The words I have chosen as a text are from the Psalm which many conjecture was used as a soliloquy by our Lord when He was expiring on the Cross. Well might it have been so, well might He recall the music of the promise

in the hour when He was bruising Satan under His nailed feet.

II

The promise is notable for its use of the word "Remember." "All the ends of the world shall *remember*, and turn unto the Lord." I wish you to linger upon that. One great subject of philosophers in these days is the subliminal consciousness, the vast store of ideas and impressions in the mind which are sleeping but not dead, which may spring to life at a touch or a call, which may even energise for themselves when we are ignorant of their action. What is lying dormant in the heart of heathendom? The ends of the world shall remember. It is in memory that all conversion begins. "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare!" said the prodigal, as he remembered his father's house. Will the nations one day remember the house of their Father? They tell us that there lingers in the races, however sunken and degraded, the memory of a golden

time when God and man were friends. Max Müller tells us that the theory of a primitive revelation is found both among the lowest and among the most highly civilised races. It is a constant saying among African tribes that formerly heaven was nearer to earth than it is now, that the highest God, the Creator Himself, formerly gave lessons of wisdom to human beings, but that afterwards He withdrew Himself from them, and dwells now far from them in heaven. The Hindus say the same. They look back, as in the hymn of the sage Vasishtha: "Where are those friendships of us two? Let us seek the harmony which we enjoyed of old. I have gone, O self-sustaining Varuna, to thy vast and spacious house with a thousand gates. He who was thy friend, intimate, thine own and beloved, has committed offences against thee."

The Greeks had legends of a happy time when God Himself was the Shepherd of men and ruled over them, when death was a peaceful passing away followed by a glorified existence. Says Socrates: "The

ancients, who were our betters and nearer the gods than we, handed down the tradition to us." The records are full of such mystic strains. When we speak to the nations we do not speak to those who have been unvisited of their God. Even in the Aztec mythology there are legends of the travels of the gods and their residence among men. Stone seats were fixed at the corners of the streets for the highest of these gods to rest upon, seats canopied over with green boughs constantly renewed and rigorously kept from human occupation.

What they remember is the existence of one God. Monotheism is the natural religion, and remains in the quiet background, however obscure or overlaid. This is the authentic saying of a Kaffir when the Gospel was first preached: "We had this word, the name of God, long before the missionaries came; we had God long ago, for a man when dying would utter his last words saying, 'I am going home, I am going up on high.' For there is a word in a song which says—

> Guide me, O Hawk!
> That I go heavenward,
> To seek the one-hearted man,
> Away from the double-hearted men
> Who deal with blessing and cursing.

So we say there is no God Who has just come to us. Let no man say, 'The God which is, is the God of the English.' There are not many gods: there is but one God." Another testimony I will adduce from the State religion of China, the public prayer of the Emperor on behalf of the State at one of the great sacrifices: "Thy sovereign goodness is infinite. As a potter hast Thou made all living things. Engraven on the heart of Thy poor servant is the sense of Thy goodness, but my feeling cannot be fully displayed. With great kindness Thou dost bear with us, and notwithstanding our demerits, dost grant us life and prosperity."

Then there is the endless sense of sin, of ignorance, of the need of sacrifice. I have no time to adduce examples, but who can be blind to the unbroken witness

of the human race, to the immeasurable and mysterious power of sacrifice, and to the truth that the gulf that has opened between God and His erring creatures can only be closed by sacrifice? How wonderful are the stories of Codrus offering himself to die for his people, of Decius volunteering for his army, of the Chinese Emperor Thang devoting himself as a victim for his famine-stricken subjects! "Let this be my substitute, this my expiation," is the word spoken over the sin-offering. Nay, the secret of the Cross was almost divined before it was uttered. We read in the Brahmanas that the Lord of creatures offered Himself a sacrifice. It is indeed an awful truth that the primitive revelation, the divine preparation of the mind for Christ, has been so defaced, so obliterated. The most truly divine becomes the most truly devilish, for the corruptions of the best things are the worst. But still, when all is said, the Christian missionary finds himself in a mysterious temple half ruined, if not wholly defiled, which was

yet in the beginning meant for God. God has made of one heart all the nations of the earth, and wherever the story of evangelic love, of the Christian redemption is told, then the same chords are struck. Some books of the New Testament and other Christian books found their way almost accidentally into the hands of a Japanese prisoner at Otsu, a scholar incarcerated for manslaughter. A fire broke out in the prison, and a hundred prisoners, instead of trying to escape, helped to put out the flames, and to a man remained to undergo the rest of their sentences. It turned out that the possessor of these books had used them to teach his fellow-captives, and Christian principles, combined with his personal influence, restrained them from defrauding justice. The scholar was afterwards pardoned, but remained in Otsu to teach more of the new way to the prisoners. It is the story of Paul and Silas at Philippi told over again. "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here."

III

(1) "All the ends of the world shall remember, *and turn to the* Lord." Mark that where Jesus is not preached as Lord, there are no Christian missions. We believe in the Church outside the Churches, in the spreading of the Christian spirit in many places where the name of Christ is denied. But it has been well said that in what may be called extra-mural Christianity, the Christianity of men like Carlyle and Huxley, there is no zeal even for the application of Christian principles to the heathen races. There are noble exceptions, but the record of Carlyle is among the blackest in this respect. Nor has there been a sustained and energetic propaganda of Christianity among those who take away God manifest in the flesh, and leave us a human example; those who take away a living Saviour and leave us an entombed body; who take away the power of God in human life, and leave us a law, a hero, and a Cross. This Christianity

which leaves us a human Christ is a Christianity which is local and temporal. The true Christianity is as universal as the love of God. Christianity is not the climbing of men to heaven by a tower of Babel, but the descent of the new Jerusalem out of heaven from God. How should it be otherwise? The need of the heathen people is the need of a Saviour. They have lost their conception of God because they have wandered from Him, and know not the way of return. Do not think it is enough to preach to them the enthroning at God's right hand of the noblest of human spirits. That will not help them. They seek for that truth of expiation which so perplexes philosophers and theologians, but which the human heart rises up to embrace with a clinging rapture wherever it is plainly declared. It is not the example that saves them, not the king even, nor the prophet. They are saved by the priest; they will never turn to any Lord who is not Priest as well as Prophet and King. They must have all the glorious truth if their hurt is to be healed.

Thou standest in the holiest place
As one for guilty sinners slain,
Thy blood of sprinkling speaks and pleads,
All prevalent for helpless man:
Into earth's lower courts it comes
And fills them with its rich perfumes.

(2) It is not promised that they shall turn to our -isms, to Methodism, to Presbyterianism, to any sect. When the ends of the earth remember, they will turn unto the Lord. For the spread of Christian missions will not only show us what Christianity can do. It will also show us what Christianity is. Into the unsounded depths of revelation the orientals will cast their plummet far. There are passages of the New Testament which after two thousand years of anxious human thinking we do not understand. What does our Lord really mean, for example, by His precepts about non-resistance? What does He really mean when He says, "Lay not up treasures upon earth"? We have all explained those passages, and thought we understood them. What if it should turn out that we

have merely explained them away? Will not the Indian mind bring to us a new conception of the irresistible might of weakness, of the divine influence of love, of the long-suffering of the Lord? We have our Christ to bring before them in the glory of all His offices, and our reward will be that they will help us to understand better the Redeemer of us all.

IV

In conclusion, there is a deep comfort in the more obvious use of the promise, "All the ends of the world shall remember." So many missionaries have preached and seemed to preach in vain, but have they preached in vain? Not one actual convert was left as the result of Henry Martyn's labour in Persia. But when Sir R. Porter, seven years later, visited Shiraz, they were still talking of the man of God whom they had entertained, and showed the orange-tree under which he used to sit. Many a missionary has gone forth since then, and has reaped the fruit of

labours long ended, labours of men who had died in faith. The Welsh revival was not due to one man, or to any body of living men. All the instruction, all the passion, all the pleading of hearts that had ceased to beat were stirred up, and the people remembered. This work is strong work, calling for strong faith, a faith unmoved by the changes and chances of the thing we see. We need this faith to move with confidence and calmness in the midst of the relentless forces marshalled in opposition. The harder things of Gospel service have been unveiled to us, and we need the unveiling of the heart of God. This is work full of hope and yet of heartbreak, but the broken heart is bound up, and it sees the end of its pain, and rejoices that it was broken in God's cause. The hope shall be fulfilled, "All the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord"—so let us address ourselves to the task anew. I recall the statement of Professor Guyot, who said that there were three periods in the life of every plant, one very slow,

another much more rapid, and the next of a whirling rapidity. First is growth by the root, obscure, hidden, and very slow. Then is growth by the stem, much faster. Last is growth by the flower and the fruit, which rushes. The world has grown by the root. The long periods of delay are past. It is now growing by the stem, and making haste. We are on the eve of that last period, when it shall blossom and bring forth fruit to the glory of God and the joy of man. God speed it in His day. Let us say with Henry Martyn, "I have hitherto lived to little purpose, more like a clod than a servant of Christ; *now* let me burn out for God."

ADDRESSES

WHAT IS OUR CHIEF PERIL?[1]

THE chief peril of ministers and Christian workers is, I believe, the peril of fainting. Some, no doubt, fall into utter unbelief, and there are cases of moral failure that make a continuance of Christian service impossible. But these instances are comparatively few in number, and even when they occur they are preceded, as a rule, by fainting. We shall find, if we look, many references to fainting alike in the Old Testament and the New. "If thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small. . . . The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint. . . . Desolate and faint all the day." Such are a few instances out of many in the Old Testament. When

[1] Address delivered at a meeting of Congregational ministers at Lyndhurst Road Church, Hampstead, July 7, 1898.

we come to the New Testament we find it strangely bound by the recognition of fainting as the danger of Christ's servants. Our Blessed Lord Himself in His estate of humiliation said, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint," and illustrated His injunction. The Apostles bear the same testimony. St. Paul, recording a stage in his brief everlasting ministry, made his humble boast and said twice, "We faint not." He gave the injunction, "And let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews more than once warns against fainting: "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him." And to complete the testimony we have the word of our Ascended Lord, "For My Name's sake thou hast laboured, and hast not fainted."

It is hardly necessary to define the word. There are few Christian workers whose experi-

ence will not interpret it better than any dictionary—this strange collapse and sinking of the heart, which may sometimes last but a short while, which in more cases spreads its poisonous fog over whole regions of life, and which sometimes so utterly overwhelms the spirit that the sufferer has but a name to live and is already dead.

Let us look at some of the chief causes and some of the chief remedies for fainting. We shall follow as much as possible the line of Scripture. One of the first causes of fainting is chastisement. We are rebuked of the Lord and faint. This rebuking may take the form of a great and enduring calamity, a calamity that teaches us that our soul's armour is not of proof. The swift sudden stroke seems to separate us from the Lord. It seems as if we could never reconcile ourselves to the inarticulateness of the Supreme Power. Years after we say with a sufferer, "I have had no experience, no progress to put me into better intelligence with my calamity than when it was new." Sometimes the long pressure of troubles, small

in themselves, has the same effect. Perhaps when we are in almost childish want of sympathy and support, the dearest friend deserts us, and indeed it is true for the most part that men suffer more from their friends than from their enemies. This treachery seems to cover the heart with a cold, blinding, and impenetrable veil of mist. It depresses all the energies, and seems to blow out the last flickering torch of hope. In such moods the errors of the past come back to us like sheeted ghosts. Then there is the attrition of long-continued anxiety for bread, an experience, alas, still common even among the ministers of Christ. They may not sink to the very last point, to the point when the wasting loaf of the evening meal is the only thing between them and hunger, when there is no money, and no credit, and nothing is left except God and His promise and remembrance. Nay, there is a lower point. It may come to actual hunger. Yes, it has even come to this. It may be questioned whether these cases are quite the hardest to bear. It is something to

be thrown directly upon Christ, and to those thus tried there has sometimes been given the power to live composedly within the circuit of Christ's promise, and to have from hour to hour an undisturbed peace. Probably the highest tension comes to those whom people suppose to have enough, and whose heart is yet worn within them by the constant and almost unavailing struggle to provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Another cause of fainting is recognised by St. Paul—the weariness that comes to those who labour long and see no result of their labour. They do not reap, and therefore they faint. Surely there is nothing ignoble, but the reverse, in the desire to be fruitful in good work. It was one of the most touching traits in the character of Cotton Mather that he had a consuming passion for usefulness, or, as he called it, fruitfulness, a passion which was not denied even in his own lifetime. His signet ring had for device a fruit-bearing tree, with the words of Psalm i. 3. When he was dying and almost sunk away from sight

and hearing of earthly things, his son and successor asked him for one word to remember when he was dead, and the old man feebly whispered, "Fruitful." Robert Louis Stevenson has said, "Our business in the world is not to succeed, but to continue to fail in good spirits," and the saying has an element of truth in it, though more that is false than true. How many are denied the external signs of fruitfulness? This applies to country ministers perhaps more than it ever did. The whole situation has altered. There is no longer the old material to work upon. The most zealous labourer cannot resist the decrease of the population, the drift towards the towns, the growing poverty of those who remain. A physical miracle would have to be wrought before our country churches as a rule could grow in numbers. It is a triumph to keep them from diminishing; and in many cases, perhaps most, decrease is inevitable. Now it is easy to explain the reasons for this, easy to give reasons and not excuses, and yet somehow to watch the process is heart-break-

ing—to see the little church growing emptier each year, to find the offerings diminishing, to feel the life going down, to be almost within the shadow of dying. Nobody, whom I know of, has ever told the trials of a country minister, but many will understand me when I speak of the sudden sickness that comes to many a faithful labourer when the news reaches him that one of his best helpers has to leave and go to town. The heart gives way and breaks under the repeated blows.

Then we have to recognise that middle life and advancing years bring with them in the physical order the failure of energy and hope. "What companies of brilliant young persons I have seen," said Emerson, "with so much expectation, but as the doctor said in my boyhood, 'You have no stamina.'" Yes, and even when there is plenty of stamina, the conquering years do their work. The lights and mights of youth have grown dark and weak. The speech comes to lack nerve and dagger. These terrible words are interpreted to the last essence of their meaning: "The

burden and heat of the day." The peace of the evening under the palm is distant, and there is a trackless desert between. Yes, it does often seem so. Christian workers come to the point where they are not wanted. They are too old to work and too young to rest, and there seems to be no place for them. All things are irrevocably clamped and welded. Up to a certain point they move in a road with its marked stages, and may hope to pass from one stage to the other, but at last, and earlier now perhaps than it used to be, there comes the moment when all the tracks seem to end suddenly in the wilderness, when there is for them no definite work, no definite way. Is it any wonder that the whole head should be sick and the whole heart faint?

What then are the remedies that grace provides for the fainting spirit?

Let us take first our Lord's kind word, "Men ought always to pray and not to faint," as if prayer and fainting could not exist together. It seems simple, "Just fall on your knees and the fainting will pass away." But

it is not so simple as it seems. Our Lord said, "*Always* to pray." He meant that there should always be the aptitude for prayer, the bird not always on the wing, but ready to fly on the instant. Is this easy? "O," said a German mystic, "that Nathanael's fig-tree stood near every house, and that all praying souls might in consequence gain true refreshment in these words of Christ speaking to them after every gracious audience, 'When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee.'" But, as Coleridge said, in often-quoted and profoundly true words, "To pray with all the heart and strength, with the reason and the will, prayer with the whole soul is the highest energy of which the human heart is capable." Indeed, he might have said truly that it is impossible to the unaided spirit. But all things are possible to them that believe. Praying so, the answer will come, will come more often, perhaps, in our being raised above trouble than in the trouble being taken away, more often, perhaps, in our being made masters and lords of our circumstances than

in these circumstances changing. Indeed, the prayer which our Lord means is not the prayer so much of earthly ambitions as the desire after the heavenly peace. In such prayer the exacting current of earthly desire is checked, and the heart is anchored to look out on the things of time without eagerness. How often has over-wrought expectation in every sphere defeated itself! How often has true enjoyment come suddenly from unexpected places! When the soul lies at anchor like a moored barge on a glassy sea, then it is apprehended of Christ Jesus and filled full with a freight of treasure. It would have missed this had it been in full pursuit, and so when our souls are bowed down like reeds in the river, not when they are imperious and overcharged, does the true life of the spirit spring and it is roused from its fainting.

Again, we are called to labour, to toil. "Be not weary in well-doing." It is especially the minister's duty to labour, and I think that this is the external quality which our people more and more prize. They love a labourer.

They work very hard themselves, and they have a good conscience about their work. They do not care to be lectured by mere talkers. There must be not only words, however many, but hard stroke after hard stroke till things go right. There are very few of us who appreciate fully the possibilities of labour. Whatever may be said of the literary merits of the first Lord Lytton, nobody can deny that he was at least a great worker. He read and travelled and wrote much. He mixed with society. He took an active part in politics. His mind was one of the most versatile of his generation. Yet he tells us himself that he devoted to reading and writing no more than three hours a day, and less during the Parliamentary session. "But then," he adds, "during these hours I have given my whole attention to what I was about." People are less anxious to see new lights and turn sharp corners than many young ministers think. But in time they will come to recognise and honour a genuine labourer. We are not to rest upon our labours, and no great saint

has ever claimed merit. They have all died—notwithstanding the marvellous results of their ministry—trusting to mere mercy. No more wonderful work was ever accomplished since the days of the Apostles by one man than by John Eliot, the great apostle of the Indians. And yet it was he who said at the end of his long life, a life crowded with labour, "My doings have been poor and small and lean doings, and I will be that man who shall throw the first stone at them all." Yet even as the sweetest sleep is the sleep thoroughly earned by work, I think it may comfort us at the last if we are able to reflect that we have toiled with continual industry. The best day, the happiest day, is the day when every hour and even every fragment of an hour is estimated with a most scrupulous care until all the programme of work is accomplished, and it is marvellous how in labour the torments of the spirit are scattered. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said Christ, and the labourer understands the union.

Again, we are to believe in the reaping.

We shall reap in due season if we faint not. We must take the assurance of God's Word—

> If faith came not to hold our hand
> How weary we should be!

We shall reap in due season if we faint not. How many faint on the edge of the reaping. They give up just when the reaping is almost due. "Beware of resignations," said a wise man. Before the happy realisations of usefulness in this life there is often a period of conflict. Something goes wrong in the church. There may be sharp trials and a strong temptation to escape from it all. That is the very time to hold on. There are ministerial suicides from sheer impatience. Read the great argument of St. Paul on the resurrection, and wonder at the apparent tameness into which it sinks. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Is this merely to say that because there is a resurrection their work will be no more

vain than Christ's work and the ministry of Apostles? Surely there is something more than that. Into each field, the field of death and the field of labour, the seed is being continually cast. Little, it may be, springs from the fields of labour, but remember, only the first fruits have sprung from the field of death, and all appearances are frost and ice. Never was there a field so bleak, so dead, as that field into which the Hope of all the harvest fell. Yet that field is to rejoice on every side, and even so this other field, so parched sometimes, so bleak, so bare, is to blossom as the rose.

Again, remember that the object of God's dealings with us is to achieve character. His supreme object is not to make us useful, but to make us good. It is by suffering that we learn to sympathise. Not all suffering does this by any means, but all suffering is meant to teach it to the Christian. In the deep sorrows of life we gain little comfort from any one who has not been stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But if we despise the chastening of

the Lord and take it too lightly, or faint when we are rebuked of Him and take it too heavily, then the purpose of God's dealing has been missed. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself"—

> His way was much rougher and darker than mine,
> Did Jesus thus suffer, and shall I repine?

It is He that is exalted on high to succour us. Faith is the vision of the Absolute; faith is looking to the Ideal as our own reinforcement against sinking. Christian ministers are to be no dainty, protected persons. They are to be as Christ was in the world, and face in a measure His discouragements until the last track of the road into the wide country of sorrow has ceased. But He has gone first and alone. We see His footprints stretching away into the farthest darkness, farther than our eyes can follow. Consider Him.

All this means that it is grace that counteracts and reverses the work of time, and that under free grace we need not grow old.

Spring still makes spring in the mind
When sixty years are told,
Love wakes anew this throbbing heart,
And we are never old.

Over the winter glaciers
I see the summer glow,
And through the wild piled snowdrift
The warm rosebuds below.

We need not even find the noontide heavy. We may be bright and fresh to the last, never stranded or worn out. However exhausted we may feel many times—and I suppose there are few who do not understand what it is to feel at the end of a week's work that the last word has been said—we are to have recourse to the Holy Spirit that out of us may flow rivers of living water. Let us not expect that this ministry will be a Christian ministry if it is without the mark of the nails. It is broken sunshine at the best that we shall have, and it must be so. Even St. Paul was perplexed and cast down, and could not speak when the door at Troas was opened to him. "I had no rest in my spirit because I found not Titus my

brother." We shall go to rest each of us with the heart scarred like a soldier's body, and there will ever be fresh wounds till we have laid the throbbing head down in death—

> And at the Eternal gate
> With our cross have entered,
> Where we were used to wait.

SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS AN ETHICAL UNION[1]

ALTHOUGH I did not feel at liberty to decline the high honour implied in the invitation to address this Society, I was conscious from the first, and have never been more conscious than at this moment, of the extreme difficulty involved in the task. With much that I say you will inevitably disagree. More than that, I shall probably be greatly mistaken in various judgments affecting the Church of England. I do not profess to speak for Nonconformists generally; but I think I am right in saying that the attitude of a large and influential part of the Church of England towards them and their work is a subject of deep and wistful

[1] Read before a society of clergymen of the Church of England in the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster, June 26, 1899.

perplexity. The characteristic ideas of the High Church party, so far from making their way in Nonconformity, are hardly understood. Nonconformist ministers and people in larger or smaller numbers secede to the Church of England. They have various reasons to give for their change. Many of them honestly prefer your form of service; many of them had rather be associated with your people than with those among whom they were born. The preference of individual ministries also counts for much. But I have never known a case of secession, though such there are, brought about by a genuine acceptance of the Divine and exclusive claim of the Church and its apostolic ministry. Though, as I think, Nonconformist views of the Lord's Supper are more and more approximating to the teaching of Calvin, it would be wrong to say that they are in any way identical with those of the advanced party in the Church of England. I doubt whether a Nonconformist teacher has ever contended that the sacraments should be exempted at any point from the law of moral

action. Owing to various circumstances also the public differences between us do not diminish, and at this time they threaten to become more acute. All the same, Nonconformists regard much in the Church of England with profound veneration and gratitude. They are debtors to your great saints and doctors of the past and the present. They recognise the grandeur, the richness, the beauty, the earnest, solemn religiousness which mark the great literature of the Church of England. They are aware of the immense purchase which many circumstances give you. They recognise you as trustees with a tremendous responsibility, as the Church which in our country is responsible in a large degree for the aristocracy, and is endowed with opportunities from which a Dissenter is barred. But they find it very hard to understand how you account for and deal with the existence of earnest religion and self-sacrificing devotion outside of yourselves. Without entering into statistical controversy, it will be admitted that Dissent is visible in England. One body of

Dissenters is to raise a Twentieth Century Fund of £1,000,000. The money will be given, and it will not be contributed by a phantom army.

So far as I know, your leading writers have, as a rule, shunned this question. I count myself very happy in being able to discover the views of such men as William Archer Butler and Dean Church. Archer Butler was one of the greatest and most fascinating figures that have ever appeared in the Church of Ireland. His brilliant and unresting career was soon ended, for he died at the age of thirty-four. He seems to have felt all through that his life was not to be long. The conviction did not sadden him. He was witty, brilliant, and gay. Above all things he was laborious, alike in obscure work and in prominent. He filled with faithful toil years whose passing he watched with a solemn gladness, not blind to the greatness and loveliness of the world, but ever conscious of its ruin, its vanity, its impending close. He was patient and just and kind, as one who even in the

flesh had already entered the realm of rest and charity. Butler's writings are partly forgotten, but they must live on in the impressions they produce on successive generations of lonely students. His Remains were reviewed in the *Christian Remembrancer* by Dean Church, for the article, though not reprinted, bears an unmistakable stamp. Dean Church states Butler's solution of the difficulty involved in the existence of Christian sanctity outside his own Church. That sanctity we know better than you. We cannot believe but that we possess as much of it as your own communion, that we have witnessed lives as gentle, deaths as calm as you have ever seen. Butler and Church admit the fact of real goodness and holiness being found outside the pale of the Church. They allow that Churchmen may meet it in various ways, but they must meet it—the Anglican, holiness among Quakers and Presbyterians; the Roman, holiness among Anglicans. There are two common ways, says Dean Church, of meeting it among us. One sacrifices the claims of the Church to the

undoubted fact; the other takes refuge in the presumed delusiveness of that fact. The second way must be felt difficult. In America the Baptists claim a grand total of four and a half million communicants, while the Methodists claim nearly six millions. That these multitudes should be the victims of hallucination is hard to believe. Butler did not believe it, neither did Church. Church is more cautious than Butler. He says that the rules of ancient practice did not provide for or even contemplate the difficulty, and that many thought that to modify the rules was going beyond the safe line of Catholic wisdom. Butler's line, which Church approves with reserves, was, generally speaking, this: that holy men who through ignorance or any other infelicity of circumstance lived outside the earthly society might yet be celestially registered and accounted as its real members. He drew a sharp line between individuals and societies. In individuals results were to be perceived which could only flow from the union of mystical membership with the Divine

head, but the principle was not to be extended to a society. Thus, he says, every single member of a schismatic congregation may be made a member of Christ and registered in heaven as a member of the Church which is His body, and yet the congregation as such may exist in direct opposition to His will, because in opposition to that blessed society by which He originally purposed to dispense His graces. I do not know of any facing of the subject equally frank and candid. Whether it will carry conviction is quite another matter, but Nonconformists and Anglicans alike will read with peculiar interest the views of such men as Church and Butler.

What then is the amount of co-operation that is possible between us? On the principles I have mentioned, principles which I take to represent the limit of concesssion on the High Church side, it is manifest that there can be no express and personal fellowship in the ministration of the Word and sacraments. I understand how on these principles objection may be taken to the appearance of a

Nonconformist in an Anglican pulpit, although I see less clearly why Anglicans should not appear in Nonconformist pulpits. I do not suppose that High Churchmen will adopt the exegesis of a brilliant and eccentric member of their party, who said that the preaching of Dissenters in Anglican pulpits was expressly forbidden in the text, "If so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart." Happily there is much co-operation between us that does not depend on any ecclesiastical legislation. Whenever a Churchman is serving the kingdom of heaven he is confederate with all the Dissenters, of whatever name, who are doing the work of Christ. And I have not observed that High Church theories have prevented the co-operation of Churchmen and Nonconformists in the great task of vindicating and interpreting to our generation God's revelation of Himself to man. We are all more than ever agreed that there is such a thing as revealed truth, and that Christianity lives upon truth and not upon falsehood.

We all desire to face the facts. We all refuse to derive consolation from lies. You will remember Renan's praise of the Magdalene: "Her great womanly affirmation, 'He is risen!' has been the basis of the faith of humanity. Away, impotent reason! If wisdom refuses to console this poor human race betrayed by fate, let folly attempt the enterprise. Where is the sage who has given so much joy to the world as the possessed Mary of Magdala?" Renan was out of temper with Colenso for saying so much as he did, and praised the Catholic priests who ministered and disbelieved. "How many discreet tombs round village churches conceal just as many poetic reserves and angelic silences!" Dogma, says Renan, will become a mysterious ark which people will agree never to open, and if the ark is empty what does it matter? But we none of us, Churchmen or Nonconformists, believe in assimilating the ark of one faith to the ark of another by the gradual emptying out of all the contents, till at last they all contain the same thing, that is, a vacuum. We

may be profoundly persuaded that what we know is nothing to what we do not know, but we must have light in our dwellings, however vast and awful the darkness may be which encompasses them. Churchmen of all schools recognise the work of Nonconformists in the study of the Holy Scriptures, in dogmatic theology, and in other regions pertinent to the work of the Church. My own conviction is that our best hope is in this direction, and that through the efforts of open-minded and unwearying students lies our best prospect of reaching unity by understanding at last what is the normal Christian faith.

If I am not mistaken, Nonconformists are chiefly puzzled, and to some extent irritated, because of the lack of co-operation between them and Churchmen on great ethical questions. They cannot understand why there should be a Nonconformist conscience. They think there should be a Christian conscience, and that there should be an organisation of all Christians strong enough to make that

conscience prevail in the land. They understand that on certain ethical problems Churchmen and Nonconformists may be divided. They do not understand why, when conviction is not divided, the two consciences should not coalesce, and do their work as a unity. They view with a half-humble, half-amused patience many claims to superiority. They can understand the theory of a priesthood, and what follows from it, if their own minds do not move that way. They can partly understand what seems to them a certain social arrogance. They are willing to believe that their want of culture may make it difficult for Anglicans to associate with them on equal terms. One thing they thoroughly understand, and that is that Anglicans may be as convinced, as earnest, and as free from self-seeking in desiring the establishment of the Church as Nonconformists believe themselves to be in desiring its disestablishment. But I confess a bitter chill sometimes comes over our minds when we have to fight our battles against potent evils amidst the absolute silence and

indifference of those who as allies might carry the cause to victory.

No doubt there are explanations. The great obstacle to moral reform is that this is a day of trial and not a day of judgment. Questions are so interlaced and complicated. Good and evil are so closely mixed, the wheat and the tares are so inextricably tangled, that it is often hard for us to recognise our foe. If we could but see Antichrist! There would be no difficulty then in closing for the last struggle. You will remember the suggestive lines of Clough—

Oh that the armies indeed were arrayed! Oh joy of the onset!
Sound, thou Trumpet of God! Come forth, Great Cause, to array us!
King and leader appear! Thy soldiers sorrowing seek thee!
Would that the armies indeed were arrayed! Oh where is the battle?
Neither battle I see, nor arraying, nor King in Israel,
Only infinite jumble, and mess, and dislocation,
Backed by a solemn appeal, "For God's sake do not stir there!"

Ours, said an acute observer, is a day of confused good and evil, of faith in doubt and doubt in faith, of purity in sensualism and sensualism in purity, of selfishness in self-denial and self-denial in selfishness. This is a true witness, and yet, as it seems to me, there is pressing need for a scheme of ethical co-operation between professing Christians in England.

Our ethic we all desire to be Christian—not merely theistic, but based on the Incarnation and Redemption of the Son of God. It is this we are often tempted to forget.

I have aspired to know the might of God,
As if the story of His love was furled,
Nor sacred foot the grasses e'er had trod
Of this redeemèd world :—

Have sunk my thoughts as lead into the deep,
To grope for that abyss whence evil grew,
And spirits of ill, with eyes that cannot weep,
Hungry and desolate flew ;

As if their legions did not one day crowd
The death-pangs of the Conquering Good to see !
As if a sacred head had never bowed
In death for man—for me !

One of the most marked features of our time is the severance between the Church and the literary and journalistic world. I can speak only of those whom I know, but I have done my best to discover the real facts, and my conviction is that alienation is very nearly complete. This does not mean that authors and journalists are non-Christians. Many of them are Christians of an earnest and undogmatic kind. But they find no attraction for them in the Churches, of whatever name. They are not moved by the opinion of the Church, and they reject, often in silence, much that in the Churches passes as undoubted and primary truth. This tendency, so far as I can see, is increasing. We had till lately one great journalist in the secular press who was also a potent Christian teacher. Of the battles that are on us I think the most important is that which involves Christian purity and the Christian law of marriage. We shall do well to be careful and discriminating in our talk on this subject. There is a revolt against the law of Christ which does not by any means proceed from

mere passion, from vagrant lust. It is the conviction of many serious persons that marriage ought to be considered as an experiment. They do not deny that the ideal marriage is for life; they do not question that such a marriage is a scource of the richest happiness. But they say that men and women marry and find that their minds are incompatible, that there is no true companionship between them; and they maintain that one experiment is not to be held final, that two lives should not be spoiled for one mistake, and that each should be free on fair trial to seek a more fitting mate. They are not without a keen perception of the enormous difficulties, the difficulties about children, the cases where one may go on loving passionately while the other has ceased to care, or has even begun to hate. They admit the fact of remorse, but one of our great recent writers has said that remorse is an impure passion, and I believe that they would argue generally that much of the suffering that attends separation is suffering caused by the conventions and prejudices of society,

and that when these disappear the consequences which now follow will follow no longer. They maintain already that in parts of America where the public sentiment is decisively in favour of separation, there is no such suffering as exists here. Those who are in the habit of reading current fiction cannot mistake the tendency on this subject. Writers on George Eliot, I venture to think, have overlooked the great influence which her translation of Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* must have had on her own course of action. But though that famous writer acted for herself, she absolutely refused to discuss the question for others. It would not be true to say that she left it untouched. The fact is, she did everything as a writer that she could do to enforce the conventional idea of marriage. But she never owned that she had committed an error, and the views with which she justified her own course of life are now being openly expressed, are being spread widely, and are profoundly, though quietly, affecting both men and women. I will not speak of the increasing tendency to

publish books which a generation ago would have been banned or might have been the subject of criminal proceedings. I will only say with your own Dean Church that purity is a virtue created by Christianity and which Christianity alone can save, and I venture to add that it is a virtue for which Christianity will one of these days have to fight a great battle.

There are other subjects which I will touch. There is the great question of the day of rest. Christian ministers taking up such a subject are often taunted with a desire to preserve their own supremacy. It is said that they are afraid their churches may be emptied. When the fight against seven-day journalism was going on, an American lady said to me that the Sunday papers of America had done more to empty the churches there than all other things put together. We need not be moved overmuch by taunts, but we must take care not to fight for certain theories of the Lord's Day, whether we hold them or not. There is plenty of common ground, and

I believe it is quite possible to convince the British public that the day of rest is worth keeping. The recent victory was due to the co-operation of Christians of every name, and it is in this way, and in no other way, that we can resist the increasing inroads that are sure to be made. In this sphere, as in all the moral sphere, no victory is to be called final. I shall touch only in the slightest way upon the problems involved in the maintenance and enlargement of our empire, questions on which I admit there may be an honest difference of opinion between earnest Christian men. All will agree, however, that the problems are exceedingly grave, and that they are problems which will never be satisfactorily solved until the whole strength of the Christian conscience is turned upon them. The same is true of the problem of capital and labour, which sleeps for a little at times, but which is ever waking again. It is a problem far more complicated, far more delicate, than partisans are apt to suppose. It is easy to abuse employers, easy to insist that they should act on the principles

of the Sermon on the Mount. Often, however, as things are, that would mean that their work should be carried on at a loss, and that the industry would be transferred, with the result of throwing labourers out of employment. Many disputes of that kind cannot be decided by Christian ministers or any one else, unless they have balance-sheets. But, upon the other hand, it is surely growing plain that the employer's first concern is his workmen. No matter what philanthropies and activities he may promote outside his own works, his charity must begin at home, and the bond between him and those who make his wealth must be a personal bond.

What I have to suggest is this. There should on such questions be consultation between representative Churchmen and representative Nonconformists, and for that matter representative Roman Catholics also. I have often thought that you may partly understand our difficulties in thinking about you by the difficulties which must meet some of you when you think of the Roman Catholic Church.

The fact that the Roman Catholic Church does not recognise your orders is not a fact that necessarily alienates you from that Church. It does not make you blind to what it has done for God and for goodness, it does not turn you away in a pet from every effort to promote concord. Rather, if I understand, you would welcome any gracious approach, and you would be willing to ask even for such co-operation as might be possible. We have done so. No doubt we are all overburdened with organisations, but the work of Christianity in this country will not be done as it should be done unless Churchmen and Nonconformists systematically meet and confer on moral difficulties. It may be that our protests have been shrill and hysterical simply because we felt ourselves so much alone. If you came to us with your sober wisdom we might avoid excesses and extremes, we might hinder the raising of needless prejudices, and, above all, we might carry through what we all desire.

Nor can I leave the subject without a single

reference to the temperance problem. No Christian can be satisfied with its present position. No Christian can be satisfied with the present power of the drink-trade in the State. Yet whenever it comes to action it seems as if we were hopelessly divided. I think temperance reformers of the old school are generally more willing than they were to accept the smallest instalment of reform. But you cannot expect them to support what they believe is not reform, but serious and fatal retrogression. We may adjourn the question as to whether it is the duty of the Church to abolish the ordinary use of alcohol. That may wait: but there is the question whether municipal management of the liquor-traffic can be adopted. Some of us find it very hard to give an answer. What we do see very clearly is that those who believe that the effect of such management will be to entrench and fortify and make respectable a trade they think intrinsically evil, must of necessity range themselves against it. Something, however, can be done, and done at once. Mr. T. W. Russell,

at a recent meeting, turned to some of your representatives and said vehemently that whenever the Church of England chose, and no sooner, something could be done in temperance legislation, and surely the time is near when a measure of Sunday closing should be passed.

In conclusion, I have great hope of ethical reform, and that hope is a hope in God. Might I call it a hope in God and in His seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal? Let a moral crisis come, and you see what reserves march up to defend the right. If God be for us, who can be against us? This holds true even when everything around is darkness. Perhaps the blackest hour in America was that in which John Brown, the abolitionist, died. Slavery culminated as he breathed his last, but the grand old man, seeing through and over the darkness, said as he went to his doom, "I am sure I am of more use to hang than for any other purpose," and kissed in pure affection a little negro as he neared the scaffold. You all know what happened.

Slavery was soon swept away in a storm of fire. That storm arose when John Brown paused on his way to martyrdom to kiss that thick-lipped child.

THE PREACHING OF HALL AND FOSTER[1]

I NEED hardly remind you that the illustrious names of Hall and Foster are inseparably connected with the Bristol Baptist College, and with the building in which we are met. Robert Hall, who was extraordinarily precocious, came to the college in 1778, when he was only fourteen years of age. In 1785 he became a tutor here, and for the five years during which he filled this office he was assistant minister at Broadmead Chapel. He returned to Broadmead in 1825, and remained minister of the church till his death in 1830. John Foster was a student of this college during part of the years 1791-1792. He

[1] Address delivered at the opening of the Baptist College, Bristol, in Broadmead Chapel, September 19, 1899.

spent most of his life in its comparatively close neighbourhood, and his interest in the institution never relaxed. It has been affectionately commemorated by two of the students who were with us till not long since, Dr. Charles Stanford and Dr. Trestrail. The last time of Foster's appearing on any public occasion was in June 1843, at the annual meeting of the Bristol Baptist College, when he attended, as had been his wont for many preceding years, the theological examination. His kind interest in the students was always particularly marked, and among the tutors he found some of his most intimate friends. In 1822 Foster began to deliver in Broadmead Chapel the famous "Lectures," which are perhaps among the most lasting of his productions. The chapel, as Dr. Trestrail tells us, was then approached by a lane, but when reached presented an imposing appearance with its fine, massive pillars. You are aware that for many years the Bristol College was the only Baptist seminary in this country. Its work and that of its alumni contributed eminently to the

revival of Christianity and Nonconformity in our land. Doddridge, who wrote so pathetically on the decline of the dissenting interest in England, was hardly permitted to see the break of morning, if he was not taken away when the night was at its blackest. But through the careers of Hall and Foster, and particularly towards the end, there was a marvellous activity in Nonconformity all over the country. New chapels were built everywhere, and were filled with hearers. When Foster died, just after the disruption of the Church of Scotland, the position of Nonconformity had been radically and permanently altered.

This evening I propose not so much to give a detailed estimate of Hall and Foster, as to indicate the points under which they are specially an example for students. It may very well be—shall we not hope it and pray for it?—that among the students to-night there may be the Hall and the Foster of the coming generation. No doubt for most what is called a commonplace career is appointed,

and many times a commonplace career is peculiarly honourable. There is nothing more sound and salutary in the teaching of Thackeray than his persistent inculcation of the fact that the commonplace qualities which lead to commonplace success are by no means matters of course, but require strenuous, long-continued efforts, the results of which are thoroughly worthy of respect and admiration. Still, few things have struck me more deeply than the contrast you often see between the eager and enthusiastic student and the same man when he has been for some years a minister. A young man will be the light of his class, the hope of his teachers, full of energy and brightness and devotion. Somehow, circumstances prove too strong for him. His curiosity ceases, his perceptions are dulled, and he seems to sit from year to year deep in a quagmire. It is not our duty to be ambitious in the poor sense, in the sense of caring for power and position and wealth, but it is our duty to labour with courage unabated and indomitable to make the very best of our-

selves. In this world it cannot be said too often that it is not enough to have ability. You must also have fight and mastery. A man must be hammer or anvil, and too many make up their minds early that they will be anvils. They almost part with the belief that they are fit to do anything, or that they owe any duty to the world. Most of us, in truth, are able to do very little, but none of us should be satisfied to do less than our best. Wherever you may be placed, you have the opportunity of proving yourselves. Everywhere you will have at least what Isaac Taylor calls "the little study, the blessed place of your converse with all minds and with heaven." Use the opportunities within these narrow walls and leave God to judge whether you are to work on in obscurity, or whether you are to take your place in the ranks of far-shining men, in the ranks of those whom posterity will recognise as among the most precious gifts of the Redeemer to His Church.

The present generation perhaps scarcely realises the great position of Hall and Foster,

their wide-spreading influence during their lives and for long after. In the first half of the century there were four English Nonconformists whose names were known to the world of letters, and who acted with almost equal force upon those nearer to them and those more remote. These were Robert Hall, John Foster, Isaac Taylor, and Henry Rogers. Nor can there be any doubt that Hall and Foster outshone Taylor and Rogers. Between Hall and Foster, as preachers, there was all the difference that could exist. From his boyhood Hall was an orator of overwhelming authority. One hesitates to say that any gift is incommunicable, but if the adjective may be applied at all it may surely be used of oratory. The great orator is at once one of the most powerful and one of the rarest figures among men, so rare is he that at the present moment in this country we have hardly one left. There was never any doubt of Hall. From the outset he threw down the most formidable barriers. In Cambridge men of the highest rank and intellect went to his

chapel as a matter of course. Without seeking it, he became powerful in his influence over University circles. Wherever he went the effects produced were the same, and they were all the more remarkable because of the utter unconsciousness and unshaken humility of the preacher. Dr. Vaughan, in his article on John Foster, tells us that though Hall began in a low voice and with frequent pauses, there was something from the beginning which promised that he would soon break away and expand and kindle with his theme. This he did with such effects as are hardly paralleled. Thrilled by excitement, some of his hearers would rise, and it was no uncommon thing before the close to find his congregation standing round him, bending forward to catch every syllable. It is said that during the last years of his pastorate in Broadmead his oratory was less imaginative than in his early years. This might well have been, but it is very clear that it exercised its old resistless charm. John Foster heard his friend during this period, and has written a closely

critical essay on his preaching. Far more significant is a sentence in a letter written immediately after Hall's death, in which Foster says, "As a preacher his like or equal will come no more." John Foster, on the other hand, was mysteriously unsuccessful in the pulpit. It is practically true that he emptied in the most masterly style every chapel in which he ministered. His congregations were invariably small when he went to them, and invariably they grew smaller and smaller, till in some cases they were extinguished. I say it is hard to understand how Foster could not maintain a congregation, when so many of his inferiors had their chapels crowded. Dr. Vaughan tells us that his elocution was not unpleasing. He did not read his sermons, he did not vary much the tones of his voice, but he always aimed at being calmly earnest, and in this he succeeded. I have sometimes thought that his carelessness in the matter of pulpit preparation may partly account for his failure. He tells us of sitting up in bed on Sunday morning to consider his sermon, and com-

placently goes on, "caught some considerable thoughts." It was hardly to be expected that he should ever have been popular, but his transcendent, unequalled, and steadily maintained unpopularity is perplexing. It is scarcely too much to say that among Baptist ministers of their day Hall was the most popular and Foster the least. And yet it is creditable to the good sense and discernment of the Churches that no one doubted Foster's commanding gifts; in fact, he was placed by the discerning even above Hall. As Chalmers sagaciously said, he "fetches his thoughts from a deeper spring." In literature Foster took a higher place than Hall, though Hall's rank was distinguished. Hall's books may not now interest us, but they have an impressiveness of their own. In his orations we have one thought evolved from another, falling like the waves of a fresh and flowing tide, each in turn outswelling the next before it. From literary men in particular he commanded attention and admiration. I shall not quote Dugald Stewart's testimony to his style, for Hall put Stewart

very low as a thinker. But Sir George Trevelyan has told us of the pride and pleasure with which Macaulay, a warm admirer of Robert Hall, heard that the great preacher had been studying Italian in order better to understand his comparison between Dante and Milton. In the most mellow and beautiful of his novels Bulwer-Lytton has devoted almost a chapter to the life of Robert Hall. To mention no more, W. R. Greg, one of the ablest journalists of our time, and certainly our greatest master of religious reverie, made a peculiarly affectionate reference to Robert Hall in almost his last essay. Of Foster's reputation as a writer nothing need be said. It was great among English Nonconformists, still greater perhaps among Scottish Presbyterians. Perhaps a careful student will find that Foster altered the whole manner of writing among Scottish theologians. A present-day Scotch divine, and one of the most distinguished, has written of his early indebtedness to Foster, and has called him, not unhappily, "a Browning in worsted stock-

ings." The influence, however, went far beyond theologians, and was recognised by the highest minds of the time. Foster, in the *Eclectic Review*, championed with vehemence the cause of the missionaries against the *Edinburgh Review* and Sydney Smith; in fact, he may have been said to have crushed Smith under an iron heel. Yet the editor, Jeffrey, was so far from resenting this that through Dr. Chalmers he invited Foster to contribute to the *Edinburgh*, so that the Christian view of things might be represented there by a great man of letters. In Foster's biography there is no reference to this incident, nor does Foster appear to have complied with the invitation. The fact nevertheless is significant. If Foster had become an Edinburgh Reviewer, he would have taken rank with the foremost. His contributions to the *Eclectic Review* are written with great power, and occasionally with a condensed weight of sarcasm which recalls Tacitus more than any modern writer.

Let us now look at the sources of that

influence which affected so powerfully both the Church and the world, affected both in a manner and to a degree of which perhaps we have had no examples in the Christian Church since Hall and Foster died.

I

They were students and masters of style. They perceived that the influence of religious writers had been narrowed to an almost inconceivable degree by their disdain of adequate and literary expression. They both regarded with dislike the great Puritan theologians. It has been disputed whether Hall described Owen's works as "a continent of mud," but there can be no doubt that he thought so. Foster himself devoted one of his most important works to the aversion of men of taste to evangelical religion, and partly vindicated that aversion, blaming theologians for the barbarous jargon in which their thoughts were couched. Both of them laboured with unceasing care to master the instrument of

style. Hall was more perhaps of a reader than Foster. We are told that he would in his youth carry on five or six courses of reading at a time. He was a diligent student of the classics, and an enthusiastic admirer of Demosthenes. He made himself master of several languages that he might come closer to the great writers. In his youth he imitated Johnson, but as time went on his diction became simpler and clearer, though never lacking a certain massive pomp. Among the writers of his age he still stands out as one of the very best. Foster, though a great reader as readers go, did not carry out his studies to anything like the extent of Hall. On the other hand he took the most prodigious pains with his style. Any one who will compare the first edition of his essays with the second will see what tremendous labour was given to the structure of his sentences and the sharpening of his phrases. He never attained to a perfectly luminous and delicate expression, yet his style lies close to his thought. It is not conventional, it is not borrowed, it is never

otiose. If it fails in being adequate, that was not because he did not take the utmost pains to make it so. We may think that some of his canons were wrong; we may reject some of his criticisms on Sydney Smith, and believe that Smith as a stylist is his superior. Nevertheless, it is wonderful to see how the thought lives through the style, how original he was alike in thinking things and in his way of saying them. Even without style Foster would have made an impression. He saw things with his own eyes, and sat at the foot of no master. Undoubtedly, however, Hall and Foster alike made their way to readers outside of or indifferent to all Churches, because they knew how to write the English of cultivated men. It is only certain that this was one of their most potent appeals to Nonconformists, and to Christians generally. They had grown weary of dead and withered phrases, once no doubt filled with the blood of life, but long decayed and anæmic. In this they were essentially right, though Foster undoubtedly overpressed the objection to the

use of Scriptural language. It is possible to take a word or a phrase even from Scripture and by parrot-like repetition to make it intolerable. But the strength and beauty and permanence of religious writing depend very much on the skilful use of Biblical language. The Scripture phrases in the hands of a master are like glistening threads of gold flashing through the common tissue of speech. Even in secular writing, as Mr. Watts Dunton has pointed out, our English translation of the Bible has been a potent force. It was in itself a new departure in English, an adaptation of English to express the oriental mind, and ever since its publication the best in English literature has derived much of its colour from it. It is a decided defect in Foster that he uses so little the phrases of Scripture. In this Hall was against him both in precept and in practice. Both Hall and Foster did some injustice to the English theologians. However careless they were as to style, there will be found in their writings, even in Owen's, nobly wrought passages. It remains

true, however, that nothing can revive the great works of the Puritans. They will always be appreciated by a certain class of students, sought, however, not on account of their style, but in spite of it.

It is imperative for any religious writer in these days to understand English style, to understand in particular the style of his own day. Even a preacher in a humble sphere will find that he cannot do much without a copious vocabulary. People may read superficially, but they read a great deal. They are dimly aware of the intolerable stress laid on a few words, particularly on a few adjectives, and they resent it. You must understand what the great writers of the time are saying, and you cannot understand it without being a student of style. I have in my mind two eminent apologists who died within the last ten years. They were both of them considerable scholars, and men of much mental vigour. One was liberal in his views, the other conservative. They spared no pains to master the reading of their profession, and were

acquainted with the best books, and yet they made no impression, for the simple reason that they did not understand the real meaning of the objections taken by modern culture to Christianity. Of course they understood in a sense. They could translate into their own limited Germanised dialect the new books that were stirring the public mind. They forgot, however, that in the English language as used by masters there is no such thing as a synonym, and the result was that they made nothing more than a distant approach to the minds they were arguing against. They did their reading as the raiders did their dining; they "carved at the meal in gloves of steel, and drank the red wine through the helmet barred." Further, they both wrote in a style practically unintelligible to their opponents. If your minds are not to harden, you must know what is best in current literature, in poetry, in fiction, in criticism, in every department. You must know it so well as that your mind shall receive the first sharp impression from every writer. You must be aware of

the subtle changes that are always taking place in the use of words. You must, if you are to win a hearing from those who are not already convinced, be able to wield the weapons of your opponents, to express yourselves lucidly, flexibly, articulately. There is no way to this except the patient and loving study of our great English literature.

II

But this power of expression is useless for a religious teacher, unless he uses it on distinctive truth. There were Christian ministers before Hall and Foster, who assuredly studied the classics and the exemplars of style in their own age. Of these were the Scottish moderates, represented, let us say, by Blair. But these men did not apply their powers of writing to the heart of Christianity. They made no attempt to translate its great language; in fact, they very nearly deserted the Christian camp. They hung at least upon its outskirts, in close nearness to the purely moral teachers

who preached an earthly ethic. Its central mysteries they entirely ignored. Foster himself would speak with much contempt of Blair's feeble and washy platitudes and high-sounding barrenness, of his little easy quantity of religion, about half as pleasant as a game of cards. He characterised his sermons as most perfectly free from that disagreeable and mischievous property attributed to the eloquence of Pericles, that it left a sting behind. Hall and Foster were both of them decidedly evangelical. They were not perhaps systematic theologians; Foster, at least, certainly was not. But they both held with ever-increasing tenacity the glorious truth of the Substitution of Christ for guilty sinners, that truth apart from which the New Testament becomes merely a book that has to be explained away. Foster had an extraordinary sense of the depravity of men. He continually mourned and brooded over it. The contemplation made life heavy for him, and oppressed him sometimes with a deadly grief, a passionate, heart-stricken sadness. His doctrine of the

Atonement was not strictly formulated. It was practically the hymn "Rock of Ages" turned into prose, with the least possible change in the language. You will find his view of the Atonement best expressed in the remarkable series of letters to Miss Sandars, a young girl snatched away in the very spring-tide of her early promise. Again and again to the close of his life he casts himself on mere mercy, not the mercy of a good-natured God, but the mercy of a God who forgives believing sinners because Christ died for them. Hall went further, and his fragment on Substitution, though leaving out important considerations, is very worthy of note. His luminous intellect, it may be observed, rejected the idea that the Substitution of our Lord can really be explained by what is known as vicarious suffering among men. He saw clearly that the sacrifice of Christ was unique. To use his own words, "It stands against the lapse of ages and the waste of worlds, a single and solitary monument. It leaves no room for a counterpart or a parallel." Both of them also

believed intensely in the new birth. A notable feature of their sermons was their appeals and applications. It is said that Hall frequently never rose to the majesty of his real greatness until he came to the end of his sermons, and prepared himself for the application. In one of Foster's letters relating to Hall's ministry will be found a striking example of this. As for Foster, his sermons seem sometimes to have been practically one long appeal from the beginning to the end. It is said, I do not know with what truth, that appeals are now rarely heard from the pulpit. If this is so, it must arise from a latent disbelief in the possible change of the heart. Foster, in his essay on Paley's sermons, complains bitterly of the shortened and inanimate conclusions of the discourses. It will be felt, he says, as if the Christian advocate cared not how soon or how tamely he dismissed the subject, as if he had no expectation that his discourse should produce any effect, and as if he felt but little of either sadness or indignation to think that it would fail. Both of them,

again, were enthusiastic advocates of foreign missions. They both saw clearly in the days when he was decried as a consecrated cobbler that the name of Dr. Carey would shine out as the most splendid Christian name of their generation. Among Foster's greatest achievements were some of his sermons preached for foreign missions, and he devoted not a few of the most valuable years of his life to the vindication of the Serampore missionaries. Both Hall and Foster were filled with what Tennyson has called "the sacred passion of the second life." They had both of them found "the deathless Angel seated in the vacant tomb." They were as sure of the life to come as they were of this. Foster was all his life consumed with the desire to know what was beyond, with a burning and devouring impatience for that knowledge which we must die to possess. Hall was content to wait. He realised far more clearly than ever Foster did how much we really know. It was characteristic of him that he said when dying, "I have a humble

hope." There was about both at the end a strange dignity and a strange calm, no triumph, no exultation, but a steady peace. There was no moaning and there was no song. The river nearing the awful ocean dropped silently into its bosom. I venture to think that any man whose vision of the other life is steadily certain and childlike, will not err essentially in any doctrine of the Christian faith. With Hall and Foster there was no wavering.

Something, no doubt, may be said in reverent criticism of the defects in their preaching. These imperfections belong to all of us, while we bear the image of the earthly and see darkly through a glass. The great defect common to both was that they were not exegetes, not expositors of the Scriptures. Hall, especially in his later ministry, took great and fundamental themes. Originally a Binitarian, to use the name which Professor Sidgwick has applied to Mr. Hutton, he became convinced of the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost, and treated largely of His work. Foster vehemently urged upon

people the duty of belief in Christianity, but rather assumed than stated Christian doctrine. It cannot be said that either of them has addressed himself to the task of interpreting the words of our Lord and His Apostles, as other men have. The capital defect is that they do not teach anything like a systematic doctrine of sanctification. Such a doctrine is doubtless unfolded in the New Testament. It is not enough that a preacher should aim at the conversion of his hearers, and then give them ethical teaching. Between these two there is a great region of revealed truth concerning the mystery of holiness. Neither Hall nor Foster, so far as I can find out, ever taught in its fulness the final truth of the soul's union with Christ and its bearing alike on sanctification and justification. We hear, and it is well we should hear, more of this truth in these days. We hear much—and we cannot hear too much—of the union of the Vine and the branches, and it must be allowed that all this side of revelation was more or less hidden from our two famous preachers. Nevertheless

I doubt whether we hear so much of the still more fundamental truth which they never ceased to live by and to hold—the truth, namely, that the Vine died for the branches.

III

Once more, Hall and Foster were men of passion, and unless the preacher has passion he never can have power. It would, perhaps, be too much to say that every preacher must possess as they did a measure of imagination. It might be urged that imagination is a Divine gift, and that if it is withheld it cannot be acquired. Yet let us consider what is the manner of the Divine giving. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I might know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." How does He give it? By a mere supernatural impartation? No, but by passing the receiver through the furnace of agony. If our Lord, though He were a Son, learned obedience by the things which He suffered, much more may we.

Hall's experience was of intense severity. In his youth he passed through the fires of an unrequited affection, with a result that evidently affected his whole nature and his whole life. He endured such complicated physical tortures as few men have been called to experience, tortures which were known in their full measure only when he died. For more than twenty years he never had a clear night of rest, though driven to the constant use of opiates in incredible quantities. More than this, his mighty spirit was twice touched with madness. Yet he overcame so completely that his sympathetic biographer tells us that the law of his life was to turn everything into enjoyment. Bulwer-Lytton, in *The Caxtons*, shows us how a soldier admired his courage, a courage higher than that of the soldier who hurls a fierce handful of his men against outnumbering enemies, and smites through brow and brain till the terrified savages recoil before his fury. This is how the captain describes it: "What I have seen in this book is courage. Here is a poor creature rolling on

the carpet with agony, from childhood to death tortured by a mysterious incurable malady—a malady that is described as 'an internal apparatus of torture,' and who does by his heroism more than *bear* it—he puts it out of power to affect him, and though (here is the passage) his appointment by day and by night was incessant pain, yet high enjoyment was, notwithstanding, the law of his existence. Robert Hall reads me a lesson—me, an old soldier, who thought myself above taking lessons—in courage at least. And as I came to that passage when, in the sharp paroxysms before death, he says, 'I have not complained, have I, sir?—and I won't complain!' when I came to that passage I started up, and cried, 'Roland de Caxton, thou hast been a coward! and, an thou hadst had thy deserts, thou hadst been cashiered, broken, and drummed out of the regiment long ago!'" It is still the law for the poet who would most deeply move his fellow-men, "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He first descended?" In other words, the poet must suffer. He must himself

sound the deeps of pain before he can speak in the new accent which only sufferers know. Foster, as I have said, had an almost morbidly acute sense of men's sins, of their need of mercy, of the peril under which they lived so long as they neglected the great salvation. I do not deny that both of these men had a natural gift of imagination and of genius, but their chief power was derived from sources which are open to us all, for we too, by the power of the Holy Ghost, may learn to love. Those who love are those who sorrow, and those who fear. Nor does it often happen that our Heavenly Father fails to give us our opportunity of learning in the hard school of grief. The love of Christ and the love of souls, if they are powerful within us, will give us the heavenly passion without which no exercise of the reason, however superb, will ever win one single heart. Yet how many sermons are dead for lack of this. We might say of many preachers what Foster said of Paley, that "the author's imagination is as subdued as the principle of vegetation in the

middle of December." Never forget the wise words of Hutton, "Till thought becomes a passion, it hardly ever becomes a power." Thoughts must not pass over the mind like wind over the grass, they must really saturate it. The life of a thought must become identical with the life of an emotion before it can really dominate the minds of men, and thought and emotion are welded by long brooding, solitary meditation, and the manifold and humble confronting of experience.

Finally, gentlemen, find what you can do, and do it. We are too much under the influence of conventionalities and routine. These men bravely broke away from these things, and if you are to do your work you may have to break away also from the prescribed course and do things which persons of a narrow prudence condemn. You are pledged to give Christ's cause your life and all you have. Whatever line of service you pursue you have the same duty of devotion and self-discipline, stern, real, persevering, almost unintelligible in its methods to ordinary men.

But find your calling and make it sure. Some of you are called to be missionaries; some of you are called to be popular preachers; some of you are called to be students; some of you are called to be teachers. Do not yield to narrow conceptions of life. Rather look upon life as sacramental in this, that it is all to be transformed into a perfect expression of the mind and will of Jesus Christ. You are no less a faithful minister of the New Testament if you serve it by the pen rather than by the voice. There is abundant room for all the orders of gifts. "He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." We trust and pray that you will live not unworthily to fulfil these noble offices.

THE PASSION OF COWPER[1]

COWPER'S great place as a poet is recognised, and in all probability permanent. Every thoughtful reader acknowledges his pathos, his sweet and tender spirit, his genuine humour and manliness, and marks in him the leader of the return to truthfulness and simplicity in English poetry. The calm perseverance with which he studied nature bore its fruit, and released English writers from the spell of Pope, who seldom described any natural object with correctness or precision. It is generally taken for granted that it was Burns, and not Cowper, who signalised the revival of passion in our literature, and upon the whole this cannot be disputed. Yet I

[1] Address prepared for the Cowper Centenary at Olney, on April 25, 1900.

propose to show that in the religious poetry of Cowper there is an unsurpassed passion, a passion, however, strangely absent in other regions where it might have been looked for. It is not possible, as Mr. Goldwin Smith has well observed, to consider Cowper apart from religion, but my object is simply to chronicle his religious views and their effect upon his poetry, without attempting either to confirm or to confute them.

I

The starting-point of Cowper's religion was his sense of guilt. It is easy to speak of the hard and revolting views of religion which he took from his religious friends. We may say what we please about his guides, but the fact will remain that they answered his questions and provided a remedy for his needs. Whether those questions were such as should be asked, whether those needs were real or imaginary, is quite another matter. Cowper conceived himself the object of God's

wrath and curse, an alien, a castaway, exposed in the eternal future to deserved and consuming agony. The sense of his sin drove him to despair. He never had any passing doubt of God's existence or of God's justice, and it would have been of no use to comfort him by palliating his own transgression, or by arguing that God was very merciful and would not trouble about his sin. He needed quite other remedies. In order to understand Cowper we must in some measure understand what is meant by despair, by religious despair, if the expression is not redundant—for it may be contended that all despair is in a sense religious.

Now the *locus classicus* about despair in English literature is probably Charlotte Brontë's description in *Villette*, from which I borrow a few sentences—

> For nine dark and wet days of which the hours rushed on all turbulent, deaf, dishevelled, bewildered with sounding hurricane, I lay in a strange fever of the nerves and blood. Sleep went quite away. I used to rise in the night, look round for her, beseech

her earnestly to return. A rattle of the window, a cry of the blast only replied. Sleep never came! I err; she came once, but in anger. Impatient of my importunity, she brought with her an avenging dream. By the clock of St. Jean Baptiste, that dream remained scarce fifteen minutes—a brief space, but sufficing to wring my whole frame with unknown anguish; to confer a nameless experience that had the hue, the mien, the terror, the very tone of a visitation from eternity. Between twelve and one that night a cup was forced to my lips, black, strong, strange, drawn from no well, but filled up seething from a bottomless and boundless sea. Suffering brewed in temporal or calculable measure, and mixed for mortal lips, tastes not as this suffering tasted. Having drunk and woke, I thought all was over; the end come and past by. . . . When I tried to pray, I could only utter these words: "From my youth up Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind."

Experiences like these are happily foreign to many people, but there are many who understand them, and there will be many in the future to understand them. It was out of such agonies that Cowper's peace was born,

a peace sometimes strangely overcast, yet true and deep whilst it lasted. The expressions of that peace are written down in words austerely simple and bare, but full of passion nevertheless. Because they are full of passion the words must live, making their appeal to those who may be able to understand them, be they many or few. In some of Cowper's hymns there is as genuine a passion as is to be found anywhere in the speech of men.

In his early and remarkable novel, *Margaret Denzil's History*, Mr. Frederick Greenwood illustrates this. His heroine has come to the first terrible crisis of life, to the moment when she is suffering "all those fevers, fever of youth, fever of love, fever of death." She sits in her racking agony with an intense and dreadful silence flowing through her heart. She wakens as from a dream to hear her old nurse coming downstairs with her customary deliberation, murmuring her hymns. "There is a fountain filled with blood," sung she in her crooning, quavering old voice—words which the young girl had never heard without

wanting to cry, or without being lifted away into a solitude from all her troubles apart. Now that the one familiar softening sound reaches her, so do many more. The clock in the hall begins to tick, there is a clattering of pans in the dairy-kitchen, the wind rushes past, and the call of a cowboy is blown in at an open door. All then is well in the world. It goes on. The old woman proceeds upon her household errands, and what she sings is that at the worst there is a fountain filled with blood to renew them that are wicked or suffer or die. The girl lets the hymn have its way with her, and it breaks up that oppression of too much care, too much thought, that had almost stopped the beating of her heart. She cried, and there was no more grief in her tears than in the rain which now fell in a close, swift shower. The words had done their work. When a little later a fresh test came and her mind could bear no more, she sat down under some blessed guidance to sing her hymns once again, and she sang them from end to end.

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

When they were done she found her lover kneeling on the ground with the rain beating upon him, and his face laid on the stone sill with the lamp shining full upon it,—a white mask upon a black night. "O Margaret, Margaret, I live! I came here to look at you through the window, if I could, or if not, to kiss the wall before I killed myself, and you, you who know nothing, commenced to sing your innocent hymns and drive the temptation away." It is easy to criticise the hymn and set it aside, but "deep calleth unto deep," the deep of misery to the deep of mercy, and this is a hymn for the desperate, a hymn for hearts that are like a forest that fire has traversed, leaving apparently nothing behind it but red smoke and black ashes.

II

Still speaking historically, I note that Cowper was hardly at all in line with the minds that seek God, not because they are afraid of Him, but because they want Him, because they feel that nothing in this world can make up for the loss of missing Him. In many religious minds there is hardly such a feeling as the dread of punishment. There is a reaching out towards the Perfection of Beauty. Perhaps this feeling is more common now than it has ever been. But the record of religious experience shows that it is constant. In the interesting and pathetic biography of G. J. Romanes, the brilliant interpreter of Darwin, we find him saying: "The two most precious things in life are faith and love. . . . The whole thing is vanity and vexation of spirit without faith and love. Perhaps it is by way of compensation for having lost the former that the latter has been dealt me in such full measure. I never knew any one so well off in this respect. Still, even love is

not capable of becoming to me any compensation for the loss of faith." George Macdonald in our day has done much to interpret this phase of emotion. Cowper's whole theology rested on the need of pardon, and the God Whom he knew and loved was first of all a pardoning God. No doubt he aspired after a nearer intimacy—"O for a closer walk with God!"—but the ecstasy, the abandonment of spirits who love God too much to fear Him was never his. Of course the moods of mind may go together. There may be the desire to know God along with the desire for pardon, as, for example, in Augustine and in Jonathan Edwards. As a rule, however, the distinction is real and abiding. It is worth while to note that Cowper was introduced by his accomplished friend, Mr. Bull, to the writings of Madame Guyon, a mystic who sought and found God in another way from his. At the suggestion of his friend, Cowper wrote some translations from Madame Guyon's hymns, but it is very instructive to read these along with the Olney hymns. Some of the

Olney hymns must live with Christianity, but I doubt whether even ardent admirers of Cowper know the Guyon translations. The fact is, Madame Guyon was hardly intelligible to Cowper. He translated her poem "Divine Justice Amiable," but his heart could not have gone almost with a line of it. It is a gentle defiance, or, rather, a gentle welcome of punishment—

> Smite me, O Thou whom I provoke,
> And I will love Thee still:
> The well deserv'd and righteous stroke
> Shall please me, though it kill.
>
> I have no punishment to fear;
> But ah! that smile from Thee
> Imparts a pang, far more severe
> Than woe itself could be.

Cowper had learned in quite another school from that, and he could not master the new accent. His religious joy was the joy of a tremulous, humble penitent at the foot of the Cross. And of the mystic's intense and pale passion he was altogether ignorant.

III

We come down to the homely earth, and ask whether Cowper understood the passion of love. It is on the surface that more than almost any man he owed whatever pleasure he had in existence to women. He was attractive to them, partly because he needed them, partly because of his combination of genius with winning and gentle ways. But it is hard not to agree with Mrs. Oliphant, who says that he was by nature a celibate. To me the most haunting and attractive figure in his life is his cousin Theodora, to whom he was engaged in his youth. We gather from various glimpses that she was a high-spirited, intellectual, and warmly affectionate girl. Her father refused his consent to her marriage, and she silently submitted, but to her lover she remained true and faithful to the end. I am inclined to agree with Mr. Bagehot that a persistent lover who has the lady's consent need not fear the opposition of relatives. But however this may be, Cowper

saw her no more. He was disappointed, doubtless, but he found others to lean upon. He never saw her, never even wrote to her, after their separation. Her sister, Lady Hesketh, returned to intimacy with her cousin, and doubtless gave Theodora detailed descriptions of his way of life. There is every reason to suppose that Theodora sent many kind gifts both to him and to Mrs. Unwin, and she probably wrote him one anonymous letter, "in the kindest and most benevolent language imaginable." But all that Cowper ever did was to send her a message through Lady Hesketh when her father died. In this he expressed "a warm hope that you and your sister will be able effectually to avail yourselves of all the consolatory matter," etc. "Your sister"—he did not say "Theodora"; he did not say "my dear cousin" or "my dear friend." She lived on and on till she had survived him nearly a quarter of a century, placing his letters and manuscript poems to her for safety with a friend. Her last days were darkened by the habitual melancholy of

the family. This is very nearly all we know —not quite all.

It is very hard to judge how disappointments in love affect the heart, simply because in these matters men and women keep their secrets well, and often carry them to their graves. The world knows of some great, constant, enduring passions, of love so imperious and awful that, in spite of all separations, it dominates the whole life. It has not to this day forgotten the passion that was between Abelard and Heloise. It still keeps that last letter of Abelard: "Do not write to me any more. This is the last letter you will receive from me, but in whatsoever place I die I shall leave directions for my body to be conveyed to Paraclete. Then I shall require prayers and not tears: then only you will see me to fortify your piety, and my corpse, more eloquent than myself, will teach you what one loves when one loves a man." Two-and-twenty years Heloise watched by his tomb, and then her body was placed within it. The significant legend has it that the faithful

husband extended his fleshless arms to receive her when she was laid by his side. More often the parting of lovers is a fearful wound, but not a mortal blow. They suffer cruelly, but they survive, and as time passes are consoled. Cowper did not apparently brood on such things. Indeed, he carefully avoided whatever would awaken the memory of his pain. He kept silence, and thus found oblivion. One doubts, however, whether his pain was very deep, whether it ever went to the centre of his nature. No, he was not the restorer of passion. The restorer of passion was Robert Burns, who sang—

> Had we never loved so kindly,
> Had we never loved so blindly,
> Never met and never parted,
> We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

All the joy and all the agony of love is in *that*! Yet who can interpret the secrets of a soul? When Cowper returned from a visit to Hayley, he passed a day in the neighbourhood of Theodora's old home, and, we are told, "overwhelmed, he sat at the corner of

the fireplace in total silence." He was in the old road of his youth, beside the house of the young girl whom he had loved and wooed, who had given him all her warm heart, between whom and himself the river of life had rolled more broadly year after year. "*Overwhelmed, he sat at the corner of the fireplace in total silence.*"

JOSEPH PARKER: IN MEMORIAM[1]

I AM here to-day in obedience to Dr. Parker's last and repeated request, and no other constraint would have induced me to speak at such a time as this. I know, however, that I speak for all, when I say that it is with songs of praise that we remember the dear father in God who has now entered the blessed and everlasting rest. We cannot but mourn that he has left us. We mourn as Christians; the whole Christian Church mourns for one of the greatest preachers Christ ever called. We mourn as Free Churchmen; for we cannot but feel to-day how rich we have been, and how poor we are becoming. "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horse-

[1] Memorial address at the funeral service, City Temple, London, December 4, 1902.

men thereof." Only if he could speak, with what lofty and generous passion he would rebuke our misgivings, and tell us to cease from man! "Moses, my servant, is dead . . . now therefore arise." We sorrow as friends, for who can but grieve for the tender, generous, eager, impulsive nature, the mere thought of which used to bring warmth and light? And there is an inner circle bound to him more closely, whose grief must be deep and lasting, for no one was more dearly loved in his own home than Dr. Parker was.

But we lift up our hearts in joy and thankfulness over the great life now closed. We rejoice that he has been delivered from his sufferings, that he has been unclothed from the weary weight of the body. He counted his last trials strange, for he had little experience of physical pain, and did not look for death. In his case the accompaniments of death were stern, so stern that the loving watchers longed for his release. But his soul rose up to confront and read the mystery, and to bear the appointed burden. When I saw him last he

was haggard, wistful, weary, and suffering, but he said, "There is balm in the air." He had been cheered by tokens of love. When dying he spoke not much of religion, but I will quote some of his sayings from the sick-bed and the death-bed, sayings which will help us to understand the currents of thought running deep and fast through the silences.

About the middle of his illness, when he thought he might recover, he said one day, "If I were to die, I should have finished all my work, accomplished all my plans, fulfilled all my ambitions. Yes," he said meditatively, "my life is mysteriously complete. One thing only I might do; I should like to write a life of the Saviour." "Yes," I replied, "and you have known no loss of power and influence." He dwelt on this with deep gratitude, and who can wonder, for few were more alive to the comedy and tragedy of life. He had seen so many suns go down while it was yet day. He had seen the youths faint and grow weary, and the young men utterly fall. It is so rarely that we can say of a human life, "It is finished.'

So many toilers die on the verge, as it seems, of their achievement. They must be content to put the unfinished work and the unfulfilled hopes into God's hand again. And almost always in old age there is a period of abatement and decay. Few gifts of nature or fortune keep their brilliancy unimpaired by time. Even the gifts of grace for achievement often turn in the end into gifts for endurance. That endurance is indeed a test. Some find it hard to subside into obscurity with grace and content; some find it easy. The trial never came to our dear friend. He was at the zenith of his power and fame when he last stood in this pulpit. "Those that be planted in the House of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." Time seemed to build up rather than dull the fires of his genius. The thrill and glow of his preaching were there, as in the days of his brilliant youth and his magnificent prime. To the last he was surrounded by crowds of young men, and he was the youngest of them all. When I last looked

up to him in the pulpit it seemed as if the fire of his eye and spirit was in no wise quenched or overborne. He lived till his primacy as a preacher was owned by his bitterest opponents. We never saw him at his work overburdened and overmatched, worn and strained and broken. He grew younger in spirit as he grew older in years. Each year seemed to bring him new energy and new insight. And now he has wakened to the eternal life as young as the oldest angel, for "the oldest angels are the youngest."

"As I have grown older," he said more than once, with significant emphasis, "I have become more evangelical. I have preached Christ crucified." This was his boast—that he had been a faithful Gospel minister. Of the intellectual splendour of his preaching, of its indescribable originality, I will not try to speak. Who can analyse its magic, its wizardry, its enchantment? When we think of it, we are tempted faithlessly to say that as a preacher his like or equal will come no more. I leave that, to emphasise the burning earnest-

ness of his evangelicalism. Thirty years ago he said, "I live to preach the truth as it is in Jesus. From early youth this has been my supreme joy. As a boy I preached it on many a wayside, on many a sawpit, and in many a field. Before I had reached years of manhood I had walked hundreds of miles to preach the Gospel in kitchens, in barns, and in village chapels. And now that I have had twenty years of it I give myself in still fonder and tenderer love to the dear and mighty Cross of Christ." You know how the vow was paid. He never took his gaze from the infinite secrets of sacrificial sorrow.

He said one night, not long before the end, on half waking from great pain, "My love to my Jesus—all the time." This intense personal love for Christ kept running and gleaming through all his years like a thread of gold. He was greatest when he was preaching Christ and expounding Christ's words. It may be doubted whether any interpreter has more deeply comprehended the mysteries of the kingdom of Christ.

This enthusiasm of love became the calm habit of his soul, and this half-conscious saying, "My love to my Jesus—all the time," expressed, I am certain, his deepest and most constant mood.

> Yes, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning,
> He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed;
> Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,
> Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

Let me reverently add a word on the great sorrow of his later years. There was a time when "like Paul with beasts he fought with death." The cherished wife who was his shadow, his second self, his eye, his foot, his hand, was taken from him. Dr. Parker's strong mind and tender nature seemed to reel under the blow. He even feared that the powers of evil then might separate him from the love of Christ. He went straight from the grave to his preaching, and it was most pathetic to see him going back to the foundations of his faith, and laying them over again stone by stone. He was always deeply conscious of the unknown and unmeasured

differences between time and eternity. The great shattering break of death was terrible in his eyes. His mind was thrown back on the last mysteries, and grappled with them steadily, but for the most part silently. He was scrupulously and severely truthful in his expressions of religious trust, and he was for a long time most reticent as to his hopes. But his wife's faith in immortality was so radiant and triumphant, that I always think of her in connection with Browning's line—

> "Love is all, and death is nought," quoth she.

Humbly, tremblingly, slowly, her husband took hold of the great trust. He turned his face to the other shore. He said wistfully, but with a hopeful look, "It is a long time since I saw her. Will she know me again?" He had waited at the gate and watched till the vision came. It came at last, and his mind turned fondly to her, and to those who had left him in the long ago. The last work he undertook was a little book of consolation for mourners, and the title was to be, "Con-

cerning them which are asleep." He has left the first chapter behind him. "Concerning them which are asleep—that is what we want to know. We want to know all they can tell us. We are hardly content with being told, we want to see it all, and take fellowship with them that sing a new song. They will come by and by. It is all arranged. Do not suppose they are forgotten. God sends for the people just as He thinks heaven can admit them. There is no haste there, no crowding, no rushing, no clamour. Here is a man who has something to say concerning them which are asleep. He is welcome, thrice welcome. He brings us news from a far country. We have dreams and visions, and many a golden fancy, but we want to hear those who can tell us anything that can cheer our hearts. Give him time, let him take his own way in telling the tale. He will warm our hearts presently. Now, chief of the saints, mightiest of the stalwarts, Paul, we are prepared to hear concerning them which are asleep, the old friends, the young folks, the little angels, and those

who are growing old in heaven. Only there is no old age there."

He greatly delighted in the quaint and beautiful hymn of Cennick, "Ere I sleep, for every favour," and in its last verse especially. He listened to it as life ebbed away. I will close with some words from it—they were among the last words Dr. Parker spoke from this pulpit, the words of his benediction—"May grace, mercy, and peace, the triune blessing of the Triune God, rest and abide with us all till we rise with the wise, counted in their number."

That voice—shall we not hear it again?

THE END

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